Chrome Shelled Regios Volume18

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These are novel illustrations that were included in volume 18

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「……ていうことがあったとさ」
「はぁ」
女王の私室だ。
警護当番だったレイフォンは間抜けな声を漏らした。
いつもなら同じ天剣授受者のカナリスが苦い顔で影武者をしていて、必要ないと追い返されるのだが、今日は本物がいて、こうして側に付き従っていないといけない。
そうして彼女の部屋でやることもなくお茶を飲んでいて、この写真を見つけたのだ。
いまよりも若いサヴァリスが天剣授受式らしき式典の最中に、女王に挑む。写真はそうとしか見えなかったし、彼女が話す写真の思い出もまさしくそうだった。
「やぁ、あいつはなかなか無茶をしてくれるよ」
そう話す女王はとても楽しそうで、レイフォンはどうしてサヴァリスは女王に挑んだのだろうかと思ってしまう。上下関係や敬意の問題ではなく、純粋な実力差として。
「あんたはそういう無茶をしてくれるかな？　ん？　少年？」
「しませんよ」
ニヤニヤ笑いの女王にすげなく答える。女王への対応の仕方はもう学習したのだ。
「それより質問があるんですけど」
「なに？」
「これ、誰が撮ったんですか？」
「もちろん、デルボネに決まってるじゃない」
なるほど、と納得する。
緊迫した場面を写しているというのに、写真の中の女王はいまと同じようにニヤニヤと笑っている。
きっと、デルボネも朗らかに笑っていたのだろう。そう思いながら写真を置くのだった。

Text/ 雨木シュウスケ

Alcheilla&Layfon

あ-1
1-18

鋼殻のレギオス18

クライング・オータム

雨木シュウスケ

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「狙うは――天剣」。戦いは、いよいよ最終局面へ！

天剣ロストエピソード・
キャンペーン実施中！
初回生産限定 特製カード封入
雨木シュウスケ完全書き下ろし
もう二度と、同じ失敗はしない――！
レイフォン、決意の瞬間――
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鋼殻のレギオス
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雨木シュウスケ
●あまぎしゅうすけ

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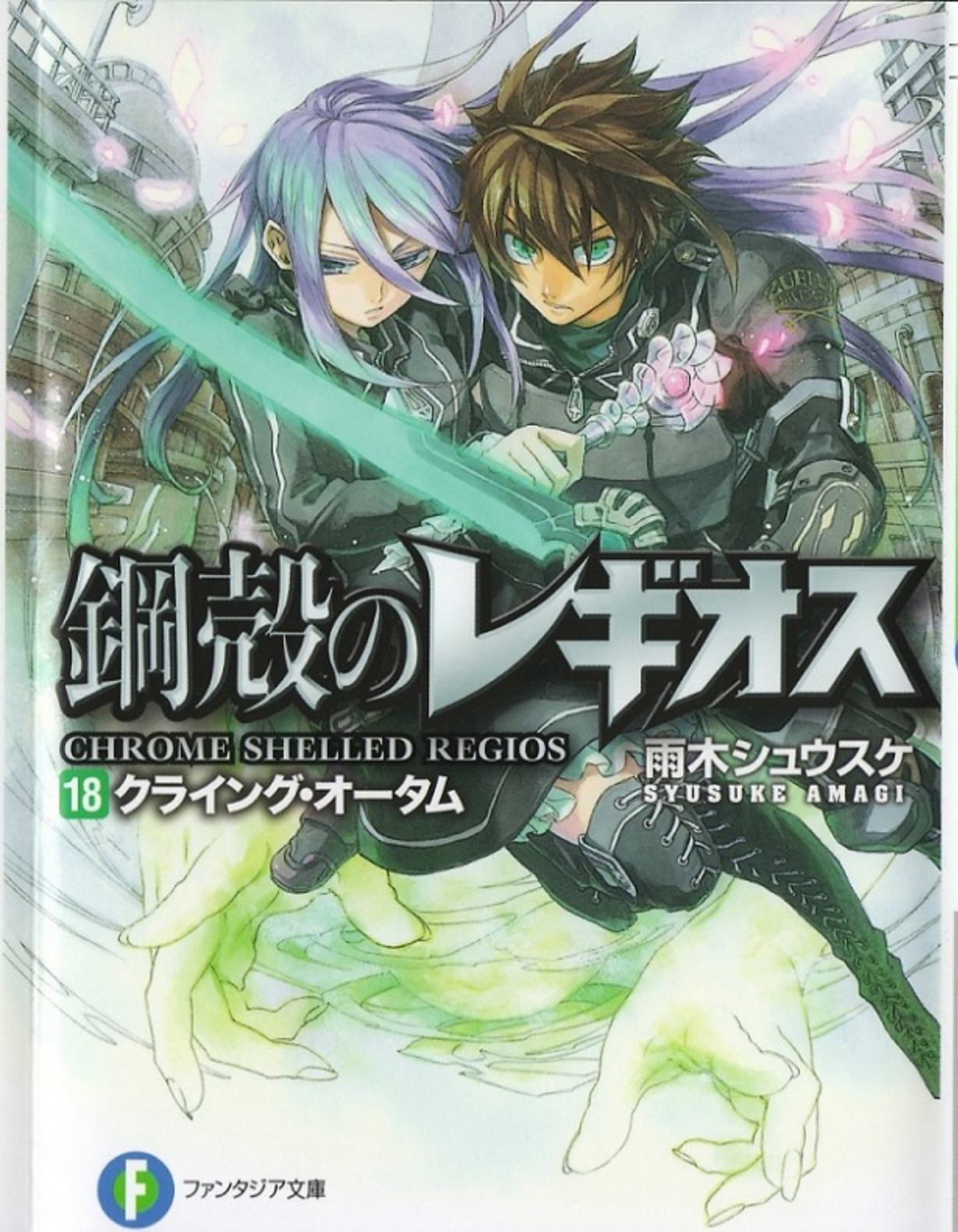

鋼殻のレギオス

CHROME SHELLED REGIOS

18 クライング・オータム

雨木シュウスケ
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ファンタジア文庫

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鋼殻のレギオス

CHROME SHELLED REGIOS

18 クライング・オータム

「天剣が余ってるって話さ。
それなら、おれっちが頂くさ」

戦うための覚悟
気持ち
戦えるという事実
――最強の証明
「僕たちに必要なのは、
それです」

「お前ならば……
お前の魂ならば」

Prologue - The Midst of a Journey and the Start of Another

As they waited for the opportunity to arrive, the city passed through the summer season.

"But, is this really what we should do?"

"Do we have to go over it again?"

The Psychokinesis flake installed in his helmet relayed a voice. Of course, this was Felli's voice and she was sitting in the vehicle.

Layfon was in a facility underground Zuellni, sitting on a motorcycle, and as Felli who sat in the vehicle beside him also wore equipment for outside the city, the two of them could advance to the city's exterior at any time.

"No, it's not like that....."

Layfon lightly blocked Felli's barbed words, turning back to look behind him. Harley was sitting in the operating room where he could open the gate. Layfon had requested Harley to help them keep it a secret from others. What had Harley thought when he had accepted their request? Layfon very much wanted to know the reasons for Harley's goodwill, but hadn't asked. If he asked too much, Layfon would have to explain the situation of his side, so in the end he had only accepted Harley's goodwill.

This made Layfon feel a bit pained.

"Is it okay if we sneak out?"

Leaving this place required the help of others, so the two of them had revealed this to Harley, though they said nothing to anyone else.

"Otherwise we'd have to bring this up to Captain, right? She might say she wanted to come, and more importantly....."

"More importantly?"

"The fact that she's the only one keeping secrets makes me feel dissatisfied."

Layfon noticed that some odd feelings were mixed in with these words.

"......What is it?"

"Ah, nothing."

Layfon thought that Felli would have had a huge reason that anyone could understand, so he wasn't able to respond right away.

"Do you feel speechless?"

"Nothing like that."

".....How could I have done this because of some majestic reason ?"

His thoughts had been completely seen through.

"That's true."

"Then, isn't it about time for us to open the gate? The person on patrol should be back soon."

"Ah, okay, I'll open it."

"Sorry, Harley-senpai."

"It's nothing, it's nothing. I should be able to just pass it off as a routine Dite experiment."

Opening the gate would leave records. The current action of the two was as if they were escaping the city and placing all of the blame on Harley, making Layfon feel guilty.

"Also..... isn't this definitely related to Nina?"

"Senpai....."

"She could only use this stupid way of hiding secrets, I'm very sorry."

"......It's not like you're her boyfriend, why are you saying that kind of thing to us?"

"S.....Senpai....."

Felli's sharp criticism made Layfon panic. But, Harley's voice that was transmitted by the flake brought a smile.

"That's true. But that's the way her personality is, that's why she doesn't have a boyfriend. We're also childhood friends, so I obviously can't just ignore her."

"Childhood friends huh....."

Still feeling pained from just that phrase even up to now, Layfon could only feel very sad. Though in his heart he thought he had to become stronger, Layfon couldn't help but feel Leerin's figure appear in his mind as soon as he heard the phrase childhood friend.

"Layfon, I don't know if saying this will help you."

"Please say it."

"Don't forget what she did."

"......Huh?"

"If you feel pained, you have to squarely face the reality of your pain."

"....."

"Painful things will hurt, you have to think that way. Then, you have to find the reason for your pain."

"Isn't that a basic principle of learning?"

Felli's questioning tone was quite cold.

"But, aren't the guidelines for actions and curiosity about unknown things the same?"

"Wu....."

Harley calmly replied to Felli's topic, and even made her shut her mouth.

The thoughts that Harley had just voiced were natural to his heart. That was how things were.

"Ah, let's talk about this later. I won't ask you what you're going outside to do, but I hope everything goes well."

"Nn, thank you, senpai!"

Harley pushed the button to open and close the door.

At the same time as a heavy noise sounded out, the door opened, and the wind from outside the city blew by Layfon and Felli across their equipment, the sounds of the motorcycle engine shaking their bodies. The motorcycle holding Layfon and Felli drove with a bit of slippage across the facility floor, charging into the wilderness outside the city.

The target of the two was the White Flame City Melnisc. Last year, Layfon, Gorneo of the fifth platoon, and others had inspected that abandoned city, and the Haikizoku in Nina's body had once been the Electronic Fairy of that city.

If they hadn't noticed that city near the selenium mine, the things that had happened till today wouldn't have occurred. This place produced such thoughts in Layfon.

"Unexpectedly, that place is Delbone's hometown."

Until today, Layfon had mumbled such a sentence countless times, because he felt it was far too hard to believe. After they truly departed, he still said that sentence naturally.

"The information said so."

"I'm not doubting you, I only feel that it's really incredible."

Felli was the one who had noticed this. She had received Delbone's heritage, the data of her fighting experience as a Psychokinesist. Succeeding in analyzing it, she had also found this information in fragments of Delbone's memory mixed within.

"These fragments of memory had originally existed in the form of battle experience, so in other words, they were memories that couldn't be completely separated. I didn't get any detailed information from her about that place. But, she obtained the basic abilities of a Psychokinesist there, and experienced battles with peculiar people."

"Peculiar people....."

"The only message regarding this part is a single fragment of memory, so I'm not too clear. But, everything will be made clear as long as we advance to Melnisc."

The White Flame City Melnisc was near the selenium mine that Zuellni held.

Since Felli had succeeded in analyzing the heritage, Layfon and her had been waiting for Zuellni to approach that mine. Since she had obtained Delbone's battle experience, Felli succeeded in expanding the range of her searching. According to Felli's explanation, the reason she could do this wasn't because her Psychokinetic strength had increased, but rather that she searched with Psychokinesis using a more efficient method, avoiding unnecessary waste.

Since her searching range had become large, it was even easier to know the condition outside the city. Felli would know it the first moment Zuellni approached that mine.

And now, Zuellni had finally come close to the mine.

"......It would be good if we could find out enemies this simply."

Time passed.

In that time, Layfon's mind was full of thoughts that Nina might go missing again. He could only feel impatient, and the powerless feeling of not being able to do anything also tormented him.

Layfon wasn't willing to repeat that.

He couldn't tolerate the scene of Leerin pushing him away that he had buried deep inside himself.

"Regardless of what's over there, everything has to be done."

Layfon pushed the throttle, advancing through the wilderness.

From the time that Layfon and Felli set out, rewind a season.

Karian noticed the atmosphere in the car had changed.

"Wu.....?"

A sticky feel appeared in the air, an annoying feeling as if the stuffy heat in the room hung around one's body.

The moment it experienced this sort of feeling, the air that the air conditioner exuded changed. A slightly drier wind blew from the ceiling of the car, and the hot air was gradually pushed back.

This was something that happened on a roaming bus.

"Is this the season-changing line that you brought up before?"

Karian had just felt that change in temperature, confirmation that he had just crossed the boundary between spring and summer .

"Correct!"

Haia in the seat in front of him gave a reply of confirmation.

"When it moves between cities, the temperature of the car sometimes changes suddenly like just now. That's called the season-changing line~"

"Can we only confirm the existence of this world by crossing that fence? Though it's too late to say now, we really do live in a naturally isolated environment."

"It's really too late to say~"

Haia's traveling experience was far more plentiful than Karian's, so his words made Karian nod his head indicating approval.

"......It's said, this world was only a space made to temporarily house the people who had lost their destination."

Other than the driver of this roaming bus, there was Karian and Haia, along with Myunfa and Stania. In order to make lunch, the two girls were moving to the kitchen.

"Was this heard from that person named Lævateinn? I really doubt whether it's true or not~"

"It does seem quite outrageous when heard. Even I currently can't completely be sure of my thoughts, and there are even times when I wish that everything is only a delusion of mine."

"Ha, though you say that, you don't doubt yourself that much, right?"

"I want myself to be able to maintain that mentality."

Karian let Haia's laugh go through one ear and out the other, while returning his thinking to the memories that this conversation produced.

That day that he had first met with Lævateinn, the history of Zuellni and this world had been entrusted to Karian, and that true nature had also shocked Karian. Now, he had gotten over his shock, and was traveling everywhere to find his road and his battle.

"But, the sunrise hasn't appeared in front of us. .....No, the sunrise wasn't anything that others prepared beforehand. If we can't find the sunrise, people can only walk the road to extinction."

Because of that, the people born before on this world had become cornered. In order to birth this temporary world, how much difficulty had those people gone through in the end?

".....You're thinking about that depressing stuff again."

Haia showed an impatient expression at Karian's murmur. [1]

"What positive thoughts do you have?"

"Who has that kind of thing~"

Haia spoke straightforwardly.

"But ah, this is all I can do. I'm very clear on that."

He patted his weapon belt, and a metallic rattle sounded in the car.

"Well, I'll do what I can. No one can do everything, so what a single person can do is very limited. People who have the ability to accomplish things should go do what they can, and the ones who can unify these people should go unify them. If all of the things could be gathered together smoothly, the problem might be easily solved~"

"Even the problem we face now?"

"Of course, even the current problem's the same. Ah, but the ones who enter the battlefield should realize that they're only mortal."

After saying that, Haia laughed.

The cheerful attitude that he put out made Karian narrow his eyes. This definitely wasn't a bluff, but rather he didn't have any intention of standing on the sidelines.

Therefore.....

"Well, in the end, what's the extent of the things you can do?"

"Nn, I understand."

The two of them looked out the window.

The boring landscape of the wilderness that went on and on changed. Haia had probably already noticed long before. By now, they had reached a distance where even Karian could see it with his own eyes.

Not matching the rest of the scenery, a black dot was moving in the wilderness far ahead.

That was a shelter of the people that roamed this barren world, a moving city - Regios.

And the name of that city was.....

"I heard there are more Heaven's Blades now. Well, I'll take one. "

The Lance Shelled City Grendan.

Seeing Haia's eyes bearing mixed emotions, Karian also looked on at the city, filled with emotion.

This was Karian's third time he looked at this city from the outside.

His first time he learned of Layfon's existence, and the second time he learned about the profoundness of the world. Every time he came in contact with this city, Karian had a kind of feeling like his path was being altered.

"This city has guided a traveler like me. This time, will I be able to guide it? Or will it be leading me?"

He had to confirm the answer with his own eyes.

Chapter 1 - The One Striving Forward, The One Muddling Blindly Forward, The One Giving Up

The current tranquil atmosphere was undisturbed.

He had left his position as the supervisor of the orphanage, and closed the dojo. Other than occasionally going to see the graduates of the orphanage and the nearby residents who liked caring for people, no one would deliberately come here.

Perhaps it was because of this, or because of the nostalgia he held towards this place, that Derek couldn't neglect the slight change in the air.

With the sound of rolling wheels, Derek advanced to that place.

He passed through the veranda of the place where he normally lived, coming to this place. At first glance, it was only a wooden cottage, but actually it used strong building materials, so even if a Military Artist conducted a small test of their skills it wouldn't create damage.

This was a place to let Military Artists practice their techniques - the dojo.

Derek entered the room.

There was already a person inside.

Sunlight shone in from the windows that hadn't been opened in a long time, making the floor and walls of the dojo shine. This kind

of thing shouldn't happen, because this place had been abandoned for a long time, with no one to clean it. Therefore, this unknown guest must have cleaned it before when Derek wasn't aware.

The glaring brightness that he hadn't expected made Derek narrow his eyes, looking towards this unknown guest.

That person had already taken up a stance with a practice sword in the center of the dojo. He didn't seem to have any intention of moving, just calmly taking up a stance.

But, his stance was quite simple, giving him an involuntary pleasant feeling. It was a sort of ideal stance that wasted no strength at all.

Derek gazed for a bit, but that person still kept his stance without moving a muscle.

That unknown guest closed his eyes, calmly holding his stance.

From his body emanated the presence that made one feel as if he were communicating with someone. Derek couldn't deny that feeling that appeared in him.

It was actually like that.

This unknown guest had come here to communicate with someone who could only be felt here.

"I entered by myself, I'm really sorry!"

After some waiting, the unknown guest relaxed his stance, and apologized to Derek.

"It's alright."

Derek who had just been gazing at his blade-holding stance once again looked at the male before him. A tattoo surrounded his left eye, and because of this, his face seemed somewhat impressive. But, Derek didn't overlook the calm demeanor hidden within those eyes.

"In any case, I'm already in this condition, so no one uses this place."

Derek patted the wheel.

He sat on a wheelchair. Because his Kei vein had been damaged , problems had emerged with the nerves in the bottom half of his body.

"If you want it, I'll give you this dojo."

Derek's sudden proposal made the male show a surprised expression.

"Hah, what are you joking."

"You think it's a joke? You have the qualifications."

Derek wasn't mistaken.

Though he didn't even know his last name, the male standing in front of him was the disciple of his good friend Ryuhou Gadge.

"I saw the figure of my good friend in your stance, a figure even stronger than the last time I saw him, and his disciple has returned . Therefore, you obviously have the qualifications to inherit this dojo."

"......You have successors like this."

"Ah, I had a successor. But, he has already gone far away, and will never return."

Derek recalled that day in front of the male. From intense, tearful, and confused swordfight appeared the figure of Layfon surpassing Derek and advancing forward.

"That person's very strong, right? Far stronger than me."

"He is very strong. But, it's his nature to be lost."

"Lost?"

"Correct."

Though he had surpassed Derek, the haze in Layfon's heart had not been dispersed because of it, and he hadn't been liberated. In front of the reality that awaited him next, the haze that swarmed his heart would definitely become stronger.

"Lost, lost..... I fear that it's that person's nature to be only able to obtain things by being perplexed several times more than others ."

"He's that way even though he's so strong?"

"It's because he's strong that he's like that."

Judging from his tone, the man seemed to know Layfon, but Derek didn't touch upon that subject, but rather continued to speak.

"It's because he was already so strong when he grew up that he used that strength to skimp on many things, skimping on things that normal people would definitely experience while they grew up, so the current him can only be lost."

He had to continue being lost, desperately grabbing on to something. He had to experience the tears left behind by defeat.

"It's because he resolves anything he encounters with strength that he's deficient in some aspects. Until he reclaims those things, he can't obtain anything."

Derek couldn't say whether it would be a long or short time before his haze was dispersed.

But, there was something that was quite clear.....

"This dojo doesn't exist only for him, and it is enough if there is a possibility to birth the disciples of Psyharden."

"....."

"So, if you can bear it, then I will give it to you."

The uninvited guest had no response.

However, he spoke his own name and left.

In the dojo that had only a single person left, Derek softly murmured the name:

"Haia Laia?"

His heart overflowed with memories of the past. Until that feeling disappeared entirely, the old man stayed inside the dojo.

When Haia returned to the house in the district that received people from outside, Karian was staying inside the room alone.

"What! You didn't go out?"

"I have no interest in sightseeing, and moreover it's best for Military Artists to gather information about Military Artists."

"Right, those two aren't here, huh."

Haia surveyed the room. Karian elegantly drank tea while reading a book in the living room. Once he walked inside, he could see a row of doors, each one having a single room and bed past it.

Karian and others had rented this big room made for traveling caravans to use as a group.

In this big room was only Karian by himself.

"I asked Stania and Myunfa to inspect the itinerary of the Military Arts competition."

"I know that!"

They had arrived to Grendan with a purpose.

In order to make Haia Laia a Heaven's Blade successor.

"But~ Is this okay?"

"What's okay or not?"

"I feel that this deviates a bit from your goal."

Karian's goal should be to let the whole world understand the truth that he had experienced, to tell of the dangers hidden behind the truth to the people in these isolated gardens that were the moving cities.

And Karian's experiences were things that had happened in Grendan. In other words, even if Karian came here he couldn't do anything.

Visiting Grendan in order to make Haia a Heaven's Blade successor, could that action be in vain?

"It's not in vain."

The other party felt that he was being courteous, huh. Karian's mouth slightly curved upwards.

"How much time do you think it would take if it were just me traveling to every city in the world?"

"An impossible amount of time."

"Correct, in other words that method won't work."

"Hah?"

"Therefore, we can only rely on the spread of information from one city to another. If this can make people feel in danger, there should be people who come forward and spread the truth."

"......Because it's dangerous, there will also people who pretend to have not heard the truth."

"Or people will think they need to do nothing, believing that the situation isn't urgent, or use the information to do evil things. I also anticipate those kinds of people will appear."

Karian nodded his head in assent to Haia's words, then put the book down to the side.

"I am currently trying to spread the outrageous information that the world is facing a huge danger. If I make one misstep, it will throw many societies into turmoil, and may create riots. No, it will definitely create riots. My meaning is, I may be a dangerous person traveling around the world and making societies unsafe."

"Haha, sooner or later I'll become an accomplice of this dangerous person."

"Completely correct."

"....."

At Karian nodding his head in assent with a serious expression at his half-joke, Haia was speechless.

"Ah, I don't plan to pull Grendan to become partners in crime, nor do I think that we should take what we can. After all, they won't be satisfied with me taking a Heaven's Blade out of the city."

"Then why do you do this?"

"Didn't I say? The things I do can almost only rely on the unconfirmed variable of information spread. So if there's anything else I can do, I want to try it out."

"Like letting me become a Heaven's Blade successor?"

"Bringing the person who has a chance at becoming a Heaven's Blade to Grendan. Whether you can become or not is up to yourself."

"......Hm, how interesting."

Karian's words made Haia laugh.

"I will get a Heaven's Blade sooner or later. I already decided that, and if you want to help, I'll accept your help."

"That's how it is. Right, where did you go just now?"

"A grave."

"Ah."

Perhaps because he believed he had no reason to continue asking, Karian began reading again.

Soon after, Stania and Myunfa returned.

Karian listened to their report.

"......In other words, we have to first pass through several competitions, is that the case."

"Yes. We did not find out what qualities or prerequisites a Heaven's Blade successor needs, but judging from the information that we received of past Heaven's Blade successors, they had to

first pass through several competitions to confirm their power in order for the Queen to conduct the Heaven's Blade successor deciding competition."

Stania replied skillfully.

"......Will our birthplaces mean anything?"

Perhaps it was the price that had to be paid in order for the moving cities to protect the people from harm by filth monsters, but the closed structures of society usually excluded foreigners.

How grand of a role would be held by those who came from outside the city yet were able to become Heaven's Blade receivers? Haia's concerns were quite reasonable.

"Ah, there seem to be no problems with that."

Myunfa happily replied to Haia's inquiry:

"Since there are already Lintence, Reverse, and Cauntia before. Even if you're a Military Artist from outside the city, as long as you have power, the current Queen will actively recruit you."

"That person is really incredible~"

Though Haia's words were strong, he showed a relaxed expression, and Karian involuntarily smiled wryly.

"Regardless, in the end, it's possible for you to obtain a Heaven's Blade."

"Nn, I know that. Then, next it should be enough to pass through the competitions, right?"

"Correct. But if it's only like that, it's unknown when the Queen will hold the qualification competition."

"......? What are you saying?"

Karian's words made Haia frown in surprise.

"The Queen decides whether to hold the Heaven's Blade successor qualifying competition on her own. In other words, regardless of how many honors you pile up, as long as the Queen hasn't decided to hold the competition, the competition will not begin."

"Ah..... It seems that way~"

"The Queen can't rely only on her mood to decide on those things. I think the Queen will also assess herself whether the person is a Military Artist who is capable of using a special Dite like the Heaven's Blade, and then carry out the competition."

"It's a very reasonable thought~"

"But, considering the information that I gathered on the Queen Alsheyra Almonise's personality, things can't be like that."

"What does that mean?"

"First, and perhaps this counts as the most important reason, she has a personality that likes to play around, and has a tendency

to decide things on the spur of the moment. The Queen can't rely only on whether or not it's interesting to decide important positions like the Heaven's Blade successors. Though I'd say that that personality seems to seriously affect the speed of her carrying out the competition."

"So then will be your time to appear~"

"That's right."

A cunning smile appeared on Haia's face, and Karian also showed the same expression.

Karian's battle plan was this:

First, use normal methods to pass the preliminary competitions, to let the people of Grendan know of the existence of Haia Laia.

"Try to use spectacular methods to win."

"Because that stands out rather more?"

"Correct. Regardless of whether the evaluation is good or bad, it is important for it to reach the ears of the Queen. Though, you must only keep from breaking Military Artist ethical conduct."

"Is it alright to stand out with a negative image?"

"My intuition is that the Queen seems to like eccentric people."

"Hah?"

"That actually seems how it is."

The doubt on Haia's face made Stania open her mouth:

"I gathered assessments on the Heaven's Blade successors, and there are only a small group that are model Military Artists and behaved citizens, with all the others having some flaw in their personalities."

"People who have extraordinary strength should for the most part have some deviation in their personalities. It's very hard to decide that it has nothing to do with power."

"Not only this, but the personality of the Queen herself is very odd. From one of the facts among those that I gathered, the Queen openly uses a body double during formal ceremonies. The body double is one of the Heaven's Blade successors, and this is already a well-known thing among the city's residents."

"Is this body double significant?"

"No. But, though the Queen knows that the city's residents have seen through it, she still continues to let that person stand in for herself."

"How baffling."

"The Queen enjoys this kind of mysterious fun."

"So our goal of standing out is to incur the Queen's favor, then?"

"Are you dissatisfied?"

"That~ I wanted to achieve her approval with a frontal attack if I could."

"We don't have to cheat during the competition process. Moreover in the end, if you don't have the power to hold a Heaven's Blade, everything is meaningless. All I can do is make the Queen notice your existence as soon as possible."

"....."

"The one who actually implements this is you, so I have no authority to command you. But, in order for you to become a Heaven's Blade successor as quickly as possible....."

"Aah, I know, I know!!"

Haia raised his hands high in surrender, and Karian nodded his head.

"Hm, in that case, this is the next battle plan."

"There's more, huh."

"Of course, just standing out can't count as a battle plan, right?"

Haia showed a somewhat impatient expression, so Karian looked at Stania:

"I asked her to look for people who have been recognized as Heaven's Blade successors in waiting."

"What did you say?"

"Then....."

Under the gazes of the others, Stania once again spoke:

"First, there's a person who was seen as the foremost choice, but because of an unfortunate accident recently he was forced to retire. "

"Retire?"

"Yes. That person was called Terios, and supposedly he was injured in an accident, and then that happened..... That's how things are."

"Oh?"

The expression on Haia's face carried some sort of meaning.

Perhaps understanding the meaning of that expression, Stania also nodded her head.

"That person was part of the royal family, so he could have hidden for some suspicious reason. In short, the person who was seen as the foremost choice has already departed from the battle for the Heaven's Blade."

"The person in the lead is out, so the current situation is hard to anticipate?"

"Correct. The people who are seen as secondaries....."

"Hm."

Karian looked at the data handed to him.

"In this case..... it seems feasible."

After scanning the data with pictures once over, Karian murmured this.

"What are you thinking?"

Haia looked over with some reluctance.

"Regarding this person....."

Karian spoke while tearing a photograph from the file, bringing it for the others to see.

"What does everyone think?"

"Seems to have an odd personality."

"Huh? That..... That..... How..... How should I say it."

"Seems to only have looks."

"Ah, never mind Haia, I wouldn't have thought that even our female companions wouldn't evaluate him highly."

Karian once again confirmed the picture in his hand. The facial features and hairstyle of the person in the picture were very good-looking, so Karian had thought that he would give a decent impression to females.

"I don't know what the girls who were tricked by this man were thinking."

"Ah, I thought that you were a comrade of those girls."

"What did you say?"

"Nothing~"

"In other words, at the least this man possesses a charm that can't be ignored."

"Hearing the exchange between Stania and Haia, Karian confirmed that he had no reason to correct his thoughts toward the man in the picture.

"Then, who is this guy?"

Haia flicked the picture with his finger, seeming to want to escape Stania's glare.

"His name is..... Inbait Touslane? Ah, that name is indeed suitable."

"Eh?"

"Now that you know, I will explain the plan. Haia, please become Inbait's rival."

"Ah?"

"My meaning is that I want you to stage a show."

Karian tried to explain like this, but Haia first, followed by Myunfa and Stania all showed expressions of being unable to understand.

"I can't understand, isn't it enough to defeat all of the potentials in the competition?"

"It's true that the final conclusion will be like that. Perhaps among frontal attacks, the most suitable method is to knock down all of the potentials in a breath. After all, I have nothing to criticize about that kind of method."

"Therefore....."

"But doing that might not be interesting."

"Ah?"

"Think about it, who will be made happy by that grand method of showing off strength? The normal citizens of the city. To the Heaven's Blade successors and the Queen who is even stronger than them, it isn't any curious happening."

"Ah."

"In other words, though flaunting a crushing strength can please the citizens, it might not entertain the Queen."

"......Then, using your methods the Queen will be happy?"

"Not only this, even the normal citizens will also be happy."

"Isn't it acting?"

Haia seemed to be very unwilling to do this.

"Do you hate cheating during a fight?"

"If it's this kind of fraud!"

It wasn't that Karian didn't understand Haia's way of thinking. Karian had a habit, that in order to make something certainly succeed, he would eliminate every dangerous element one by one, and conclude with an overwhelming offensive. If he could, Haia wanted to attack head-on and rightfully fight for the Heaven's Blade.

Karian clearly understood Haia's frame of mind.

However.....

"From my point of view, I want you to become a Heaven's Blade successor as quickly as possible."

"That's something I've heard before."

"Ah, in that case, I no longer have any other words to convince you."

Other than Karian, everyone felt a great sense of surprise at his sentence.

"Decide for yourself. To me, as long as you become a Heaven's Blade successor, I have already accomplished my goal here."

"Enriching your fighting power?"

"Correct. This world bears the fate of resistance, so I have to provide the impetus, cobbling together enough force to face this fate, and then I also want to arouse the awareness of other powers. This is my mission, the mission entrusted to myself."

"By now, I don't even want to hear your ambitions."

Haia showed an annoyed expression, and Karian raised his hands to indicate that he would say no more, and then left the room.

It was nearly dinnertime, and Karian walked towards the restaurant.

"Is this okay?"

Chasing from behind, Stania caught up to him like this.

"What's okay or not?"

"Young master is his employer, and if you only assert 'act according to my plan', he has no way to refuse."

"Something like obtaining a Heaven's Blade isn't something that can be carried out relying only on a mercenary contract. This is also a long-cherished wish to him, so the situation isn't that simple. "

"But....."

"When we started out he seemed very vigorous. But regardless of cheating during battle, he seems to really dislike cheating in places outside of battle."

"Because tricks in battle are also a way of offense."

"Hm."

But, Haia had once before kidnapped Felli in order to challenge Layfon to a fight.

So Karian had recognized that he was able to use such means.

"......Meaning that is a choice of last resort?"

At the time, Haia had taken advantage of the chaotic situation of the Military Arts competition to use such means, so the first time even Karian couldn't correctly grasp the entire situation.

Of course, Karian also couldn't learn of his thoughts at the time.

Even if Haia had complex thoughts towards Layfon, judging by the Mercenary Gang's actions afterward, it was definite that something had indeed happened to the Mercenary Gang at that time. Perhaps this also had something to do with the kidnapping.

"Is he unexpectedly good-natured?"

"What do you plan to do?"

"Ah, it's not that using a head-on attack and fighting battle after battle means he can't become a Heaven's Blade. If the situation turns into that, we can only wait for the conclusion."

Haia didn't know that there were people in the corridor discussing him, and was only pondering the situation in his heart.

"Haia......?"

"Ah..... I'm fine."

An uncomfortable voice made him raise his head. Eyes that seemed about to cry like usual looked at Haia.

Myunfa's worries weren't totally wrong.

"If it were normal, it would make no difference to follow Boss Karian's battle plan~"

Haia showed a forced smile. It wasn't that Karian wanted Haia to do evil deeds like kidnapping people, but only wanted him to act out a performance, letting him stand in the most favorable position. The situation was only like that. If things were normal, Haia could easily do these small things unabashedly. That should be the case.

Up till now, Haia had used that frame of mind to listen to Karian's words.

"Do you hate this plan that much?"

"Eh~ I'm not too sure myself."

Obvious disgust had not appeared in Haia's heart.

However, a slightly strange hesitation had indeed showed up in his heart.

"What should I say~ It's right that I only want a Heaven's Blade ~"

But, this was because Haia felt that he could only repay what his adoptive father Ryuhou had given him like this. Also, this was because Ryuhou's friend and companion Derek's son Layfon had become a Heaven's Blade successor, inflaming Haia's competitive heart.

He wanted to prove that he was very strong.

To whom?

"......Are those guys here?"

".....The Mercenary Gang seems to have disbanded."

"It really turned into this~"

Haia had known that in his heart long ago. After completing the mission in Zuellni, the Mercenary Gang began crumbling. Haia obviously had to supervise it, but more importantly, the Mercenary Gang might have already accomplished the expectations of its mission.

"What about Fermaus?"

"Doesn't seem to be here."

"Not here.....?"

Fermaus was the Mercenary Gang's Psychokinesist, an old member who had joined the Mercenary Gang at the same time as Ryuhou, and a person whose hometown was Grendan. After Haia

left, Fermaus should have been the person in charge of the Mercenary Gang, so he should have seen with his own eyes the dissolving of the Mercenary Gang.

"His hometown should be Grendan, but somehow he didn't stay here!?"

"Ah?"

Myunfa tilted her head to think with a serious expression, and Haia could only mutter the words, "Ah, no difference."

"Perhaps he went to travel by himself!"

Fermaus had only stayed and fought in the Mercenary Gang for Ryuhou, and had dutifully maintained the Mercenary Gang's operations after he died. However, Haia had been the one who destroyed the Mercenary Gang, and this made him feel apologetic.

"Is that why?"

Myunfa also cared about Fermaus.

"That's all I can think of."

The person who had always been by him had left. If he didn't know when they would cross paths or where they would see each other again, he could only trust that the other person was happy.

"Ah... but how should I say it, this impatient feeling....."

That kind of hard-to-describe feeling was truly very annoying. The situation with the Mercenary Gang suddenly appeared in his heart, so Haia felt that they were the reason for his impatient mood . Because of that, Haia had asked Myunfa for news about them, but even though he asked, the situation wouldn't improve.

Haia didn't have any feeling of suddenly being enlightened, nor did he feel more impatient.

In other words, the situation of the Mercenary Gang didn't have anything to do with his current mood.

"Ah... but, no. Those guys are also the reason. Though they're the reason, they're not the only reason, that's definitely correct."

"Haia?"

Haia's response as he scratched his hair made Myunfa ask this in a worried tone.

Haia felt that he had almost found the answer. However, no matter how much more he said this was all he felt. Haia also didn't know whether this was truly the reason for his impatience.

"......In other words, its that?"

The event that happened in the dojo.

Haia had thought of going to see the place that was related to Ryuhou, so he had advanced to the Psyharden dojo, and then had come across Derek there.

That person was Layfon's teacher. Haia didn't want to reveal his identity, and hadn't thought of getting along well with Derek. Haia also knew of Ryuhou's thoughts towards Derek, but another kind of essentially competitive feeling had constructed a wall in his heart.

Derek had easily stepped across that wall.

Haia began feeling that the words Derek had spoken in front of himself at the time were the core of this kind of impatient feeling.

".....Becoming a Heaven's Blade means....."

"Nn."

"Becoming a resident of this city."

"....Nn."

"Do you think I can set down my roots?"

"I'm sure you can."

"Really? I am Haia Laia, known even by Myunfa to be the trickster Haia."

"That's from the past."

"It isn't that easy to change someone's personality."

Haia thought of the things that had happened in his hometown. After his Military Artist parents died, no one was willing to adopt Haia, and because of this he had become an orphan, and his distrust of others let Haia begin misbehaving. After Haia escaped the orphanage he continually performed evil deeds, and at the end was finally caught by the city police, and received the death penalty of being expelled from the city. Ryuhou had come to inquire right before the sentence and sheltered Haia.

"I think the life of roaming from one city to another is very suitable for me."

In the end, Haia wasn't able to integrate well into even the Mercenary Gang that he had once thought of as his home.

"Haia, but, then....."

"Nn, right, that's correct. After all it's a fact that I want to become a Heaven's Blade successor."

Myunfa seemed to have wanted to say something.

However, Haia deliberately did not ask.

"Moreover, if the things from Boss Karian's mouth truly happened, then we can only fight. Or maybe escape, there's that option~"

"Haia....."

"Okay, I'll go according to the boss's battle plans."

The impatient feeling hadn't disappeared, but Haia already saw its true colors.

Setting his roots down in a city. When he was facing the reality of obtaining a Heaven's Blade, he had noticed another fact.

He couldn't set down his roots.

Haia planned to use this decision to scrub away the impatience.

In order to catch up to Karian and the others, Haia walked to the restaurant, However, that impatience still remained in his heart .

"It seems like someone interesting has appeared recently."

The Queen said this. The cool weather had already become a part of normal life, and one could truly feel that the city had entered the autumn.

"Oh....."

Elsmau turned her head around, and before her was the Queen with a bulletin of the Military Arts competition in her hand. The

Queen seemed to want to let her see, lightly waving the leaflet detailing the results of the competition from that day.

"He's a hot topic."

"Oh."

Elsmau once again responded in an ambiguous tone.

She knew what the Queen wanted to say.

But honestly, she wanted to pretend she was unaware if she could.

On the leaflet was printed a big caption: 'Haia Laia wins beautifully, an unstoppable winning record'.

"He eliminated the Military Artists seen by the citizens as Heaven's Blade contenders one by one in order. He started with that..... what's he called? That person with no use except for looks? "

Inbait Touslane. Elsmau muttered that name in her heart, but she completely didn't want to tell the Queen that information.

The era of Delbone single-handedly dominating all of Grendan's information had ended, and the current arrangement was an information-gathering network relying on many Psychokinesists with Elsmau at the center.

Even if that was how it worked, all of the information would centralize at Elsmau, but Elsmau still didn't want to let the Queen think she would diligently gather information herself, and moreover this information had no reason to be conveyed.

"This Haia Laia, isn't that guy your previous boss?"

"....."

But in front of the Queen Alsheyra Almonise, perhaps this way of thinking wouldn't work.

"Your Majesty..... The current me has already sealed away the past."

Perhaps it was the lack of change in expression that kept the other party from understanding, but Elsmau's displeasure dissipated in front of the Queen.

The reason Elsmau didn't have expressions wasn't because she wore the cold mask of a Psychokinesist, but because she had yet to adapt to completely losing her facial muscles once before.

"You shouldn't have needed to seal them, right?"

"But, I'm different from other people, not a form that the city's residents can all agree to holding a Heaven's Blade. I think that in this kind of situation, it wouldn't be such a good idea to open my past....."

By the nature of Psychokinesists, they couldn't wield all of their power in a competition, nor could they hold a showdown. Moreover even if there were people who did this, very few could please the city's residents and make them come in advance to watch the competition. Also, Delbone had been the first of these kinds of people to be a Heaven's Blade successor - since there were

no other Psychokinesists as Heaven's Blades, there were no conventions for any methods by which a Psychokinesist became a Heaven's Blade.

Therefore, it should be right to set contributions on the battlefield as standards for assessment, but Elsmau's fighting experience in Grendan was not plentiful, and she had been sheltered in the Mercenary Gang at a very young age, and more importantly, battle experience from so long ago wouldn't convince the current Military Artists.

Even if it was Delbone's direct instruction to let Elsmau be a Heaven's Blade and that it had received the Queen's approval along with the approval of other Heaven's Blades successors, it couldn't be concluded from this that other Military Artists or normal citizens approved of this.

Whether out of contempt or scorn of mercenaries, the number of Military Artists or citizens who were wary of the Mercenary Gang were not few. Elsmau was the Psychokinesist in charge of gathering information, so she believed that she should avoid arousing the dislike of these people.

She didn't want that no matter who it was, especially those annoying people who peered into her own life almost without misgivings.

On this point, Alsheyra who had won the esteem of the city's residents was a great person.

And Elsmau's current position was quite unstable.

"Really? I feel that your popularity isn't bad, right?"

"Because I hid my past."

"Is that it? Ah, then whatever."

The Queen didn't seem to plan on continuing the topic.

"What I care about is this competition. Don't pretend you don't know, you've been following his competitions, right?"

"Nn, that's because....."

The tone that seemed as if it had seen through everything aroused Elsmau's resistance, but that kind of mood wouldn't have any use against the Queen, and Elsmau could only endlessly sigh.

"That kind of fighting method is pretty interesting."

Alsheyra looked at the picture published in the report with a cunning smile covering her face.

"I always think that he seemed to be deliberately acting like a villain. Because of this, he very quickly aroused the citizen's notice. And competing against the ones that everyone thinks are contenders for the Heaven's Blades, that way of doing things is pretty interesting."

"Perhaps he's only choosing to compete against those with power?"

"It's not only that, right? If it were, then in his first competition, he wouldn't have any reason to fight that..... what's his name, that good-looking youngster, to a tie, right?"

Inbait Touslane. Elsmau once again said that name inside her heart.

This also made her feel confused.

That competition was Haia's first competition in Grendan, and it didn't seem like his body was unwell.

He should have been able to win against that opponent.

However, the result had been a tie, and moreover it was intentional. It seemed that Haia had cleverly thrown the match and Inbait had not noticed.

"I don't know what he's planning, but he seems pretty interesting. His power seems decent too."

".....Are you thinking of granting him a Heaven's Blade?"

"What do you want me to do?"

The mischievous smile on Alsheyra's face deepened.

So that was it, the Queen had made conversation with Elsmau to allow herself to say this.

".....If he doesn't have power, letting Haia become a Heaven's Blade is only giving him an early death."

Elsmau chose her words carefully. Though she didn't know what the Queen was thinking..... no, Elsmau had already grasped the Queen's personality, so she knew that these were only mischievous words. Even so, she still spoke carefully.

"Ah, a safe way of replying, how boring."

Her anticipated reply made Elsmau unconsciously relax her breath.

"Ah, whatever. I feel that missing two Heaven's Blades is a bit bad in many aspects."

Alsheyra spoke her true feelings, and Elsmau turned herself completely towards her.

"Even so, I can't just hand them out carelessly. I saw that girl who was possessed by the Haikizoku, but I don't really like her. Is it because I feel like there's someone pushing her from behind? Anyway, I just don't like her. Though it's too bad to you guys who worked hard to find the Haikizoku."

"......Not really."

She really wanted to say that it was the previous ruler of Grendan who had formed the Salinvan Guidance Mercenary Gang to find the Haikizoku.

But after the regime change, Alsheyra hadn't stopped the mission halfway, and from this it could be seen that she vaguely held some sorts of expectations of the Haikizoku.

"It's because of this that I'm looking for someone to replace Tigris and that guy Wolfstein. Well....."

Alsheyra looked at the leaflet again.

She gazed at Haia who showed an annoying smile in the picture .

"After seeing this hell, can that youngster still maintain his calm expression?"

"He can keep it up."

Alsheyra showed a 'Hmm?' surprised expression, and Elsmau moved her gaze from the Queen.

"If he really has the desire."

"Oh? Then I'll continue observing his performance. Because I'm pretty interested in what sneaky trick he's playing out."

If he truly desired to get a Heaven's Blade..... Fermaus left Alsheyra's side while slowly letting that sentence engulf her.

Heaven's Blade successor.

Haia couldn't even count as having been born in Grendan, so why would he pursue a Heaven's Blade?

The final place her thinking arrived at was the past. At the time, Elsmau claimed to be the mercenary Fermaus.

Elsmau who bore great expectations had escaped her home, and the consequence of carrying Ryuhou's sentiment had almost destroyed her.

Elsmau had acquired a peculiar constitution that suited filth monsters, also lost her appearance as a woman because of this.

At that time, she met a youngster almost like a feral dog.

That person was Haia.

The completely filthy orphan had flaunted his misfortune, and Elsmau had felt anger at this, so she showed her true features. What Elsmau had seen at that time was the strength of a youngster who flaunted his misfortune like herself, and who relied on his own strength to attempt to stand up again though he had been severely beaten down.

Ryuhou had been the person who gave the youngster a helping hand.

Elsmau didn't know what Ryuhou had been thinking at that time. But, she used the slow process of Haia changing from a feral dog to a mercenary to motivate herself, and stood up again.

Afterwards, Haia obtained a second father.

If he had a reason to obtaining a Heaven's Blade, it was definitely to honor the dead Ryuhou.

With that kind of conviction, could he really grasp a Heaven's Blade?

Could he get through that hell?

Such things had clearly happened to the Queen, and the Heaven's Blade successors didn't doubt the Queen's view.

Elsmau..... didn't really understand.

She had become Delbone's successor because Delbone, realizing her death, had convinced her, and because Delbone's death had semi-forced her to succeed her position.

"Am I the only person without enough determination?"

After lightly sighing, Elsmau began taking strides.

As she walked, the memory of when she had once been Fermaus emerged in her mind like a daydream.

Haia continuously won.

Among the Grendan Military Artists, the number who thought they should defeat Haia kept increasing. However, it wasn't only feelings of dislike, and others also had a true atmosphere of welcoming strength. Those good feelings, or perhaps the atmosphere of a fair fight, was a bit unexpected to Karian.

However, the atmosphere that Karian had expected still brewed in Grendan, gradually taking shape.

"Then, will this next push be enough?"

Karian who murmured this stood in front of a door.

He rang the doorbell in front of him. Karian got approval beforehand, so he wasn't ignored, and the door opened, and someone led him into the residence.

Stania walked behind Karian.

The two of them were brought to a room that looked like it was for receiving guests.

Karian sat on the sofa and waited, and not long after that person came over to this area.

"......It's been a long time."

That girl led a seemingly young bodyguard, who saluted Karian as soon as he saw him. Karian also quickly stood up from the sofa, greeting her:

"I am very grateful for your coming to receive us."

The one who had entered the room was Leerin.

However, she already wasn't the Leerin that Karian knew well.

The current her was the princess who possessed the successor position of Grendan's Royal Families, Leerin Eutnohl.

"Can you first stop that kind of formal language?"

"If you wish it."

The language mixed with a shy smile made Karian raise his head to look at Leerin.

Leerin was a bit different. Perhaps it was because her expression seemed a bit more solemn than before, but it could be the eyepatch on her right eye that made Karian produce such thoughts.

However, Karian dared to confirm something.

(Her eyes aren't smiling.)

Leerin, who wore an eyepatch, only showed her left eye. Seeing that lone left eye, Karian had that feeling.

Though her expression slightly showed the longing and puzzlement at meeting an old acquaintance, her eye held an emotionless attitude of sitting on the sidelines.

Karian remembered that look; he had seen it countless times in the mirror.

It was Karian's look when he had served as Zuellni's Student Council President.

Karian had once come forward to revitalize the declining Academy City. Leerin's look was the same as him back then.

"Well, can I ask you what you're doing?"

Leerin's question pulled back his thoughts that were about to fly away. Karian changed his frame of mind, trying to progress to today's topic.

"I'm currently assisting a Military Artist."

"It couldn't be Haia Laia, right?"

"You know?"

"Her Majesty seems to be quite cheerful about it."

By this point in time, Leerin perhaps had seen through Karian's intent.

"Is that so, I'm really flattered."

In any case, it should be good news that the Queen was happy.

However, perhaps Leerin didn't think so. Her next question showed that.

".....Are you thinking of taking a Heaven's Blade outside?"

"Is that possible?"

"....."

"Hm."

Leerin was silent without a word, and Karian thought about the meaning in her words.

She seemed to be thinking about the hazards of Karian bringing a Heaven's Blade outside the city.

But, how should a Heaven's Blade be dealt with after it left the city?

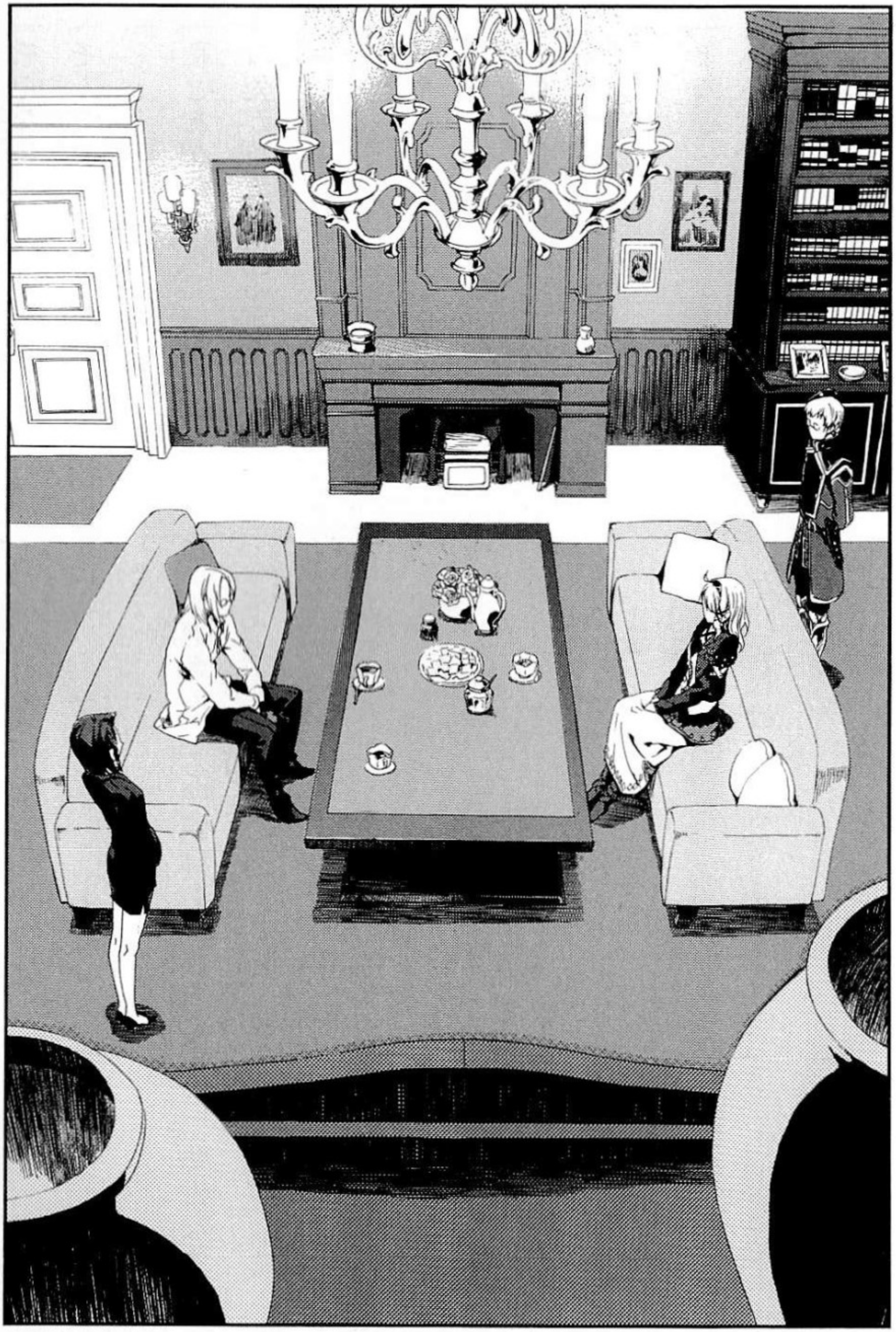
"I experienced the commotion created by that creature. Is that your reason?"

"Nn."

"In order to protect your own city, you plan to steal a powerful weapon?"

"....."

The silence was pretty much an answer.



Stania gave off a presence that made the atmosphere become stiff, and Karian lightly tapped her elbow, and once again looked at Leerin. In order to confirm whether he had judged the entire message, or if he had judged incorrectly, Karian asked of those extremely cold eyes:

"I haven't even dreamed of being able to do such a thing....."

Karian swallowed the second half of his sentence. After quietly murmuring, he knew the answer. He feared it was the correct answer.

So he swallowed the next words.

(Layfon.)

Did Leerin think the goal of him coming here was to give the Heaven's Blade to him?

During the commotion after Zuellni and Grendan made contact, something had happened between the two of them after all, and Karian couldn't figure it out. However, from Layfon's appearance afterward, and judging by Felli's actions who had been silently watching from the side, Karian could speculate an answer.

Also, Leerin's current look.

She showed the same look as the past him.

Why would she be Grendan's successor to the throne?

She definitely possessed a secret that someone who was not deeply involved couldn't understand.

Unlike Felli who was like a doll, and unlike Nina who was like a blade that had been excessively sharpened, the past Leerin had only been an extremely normal, cheerful girl, but the current her had an extraordinarily majestic eye on her face. That lone eye surrounded her entire body with a miserable atmosphere.

The grimness held in that eye was perhaps even darker than Karian's back them. Leerin's resolution was definitely even harsher than Karian's.

Should he or shouldn't he prod at that secret.....

Even if he did touch that secret, what could Karian do?

(But.....)

As expected, Karian still cared about that eye.

The feelings that had been concealed under that eye.

The feelings had been deeply sealed in that cold attitude. She had frozen those feelings, forbidding them from influencing her actions.

"......!"

If your goal is to give Haia Laia another chance, I can speak to Her Majesty for you."

Karian had planned to speak, but Leerin opened her mouth a step ahead and stopped him.

"Because truly, I do not have the power to decide whether or not to hold the competition to choose Heaven's Blade successors."

"That's great, because I can't stay in this city for long."

"Is that so?"

Leerin wanted to change the topic, and Karian decided to go along with her intentions.

"I myself also obtained something from that commotion, and I have goals. Perhaps I think too highly of myself, but in order to reach my goal, I cannot stay in this place."

It was true. This was experience that Karian had obtained when he was the Student Council President, and was already a basic conclusion that he had derived.

"I see."

Lerrin nodded her head while thinking, and Karian didn't miss this reply of hers.

"I will strongly propose to her Majesty that she do this."

"Is that so. Then, I will be able to move quickly."

"......But, the conclusion still isn't....."

"This conclusion isn't in my hands, rather it will be guided relying in Haia's power."

"That's true."

Leerin nodded again, and this conversation ended here.

After saying 'then I'll take my leave', Karian stood up. From Leerin's surroundings leaked an atmosphere of having relaxed her breath, and though it was only for a moment, Karian didn't miss that response.

"Right, right."

Perhaps it was because of this that Karian let this slip.

"Though our time was short, we still were companions who lived in the same city, so I would like to give you a recommendation."

"......What recommendation?"

"It would have been a bit better if you had been completely rescued."

"......Huh?"

"This has nothing to do with the problems we both share, just with the problem that exists in your heart. It's because you never solved that problem that you're so pained."

"That thing....."

"You really have to show this kind of unfeeling look."

"....."

"It's not only you and I. The problem in our hands is truly too great. In this kind of situation, the other heavy burden that you are embracing will definitely make you suffer failures."

".....That kind of thing, even if you're brilliant, still....."

"Yes, it's not something that can be foretold, so it's only my guess. It's a guess according to my own experience. Then, I'll be leaving."

The guard next to her stared at Karian with a ferocious look. Stania changed her standing position without blinking an eye, inserting herself between that man and Karian who was about to leave the room.

Leerin stayed sitting on the sofa.

"Is this good?"

While they left the residence, Stania asked this.

"What's good or not?"

"What I mean is the thing about Haia."

"Nn, that should be good. The competition will begin."

Leerin had only said that she would speak to the Queen, but Karian was truly convinced that the decision to carry out the Heaven's Blade successor competition had already been finalized.

Leerin had obtained something that allowed her to possess this kind of authority. Though he didn't have any clear evidence, Karian had this kind of feeling, and he didn't think it was himself over-thinking things.

The presence surrounding Leerin's body was that kind of thing. It was an expression of naturally standing tall, the expression of understanding how heavy the pressure of her decisions was.

Moreover, that kind of pressure put her on the verge of collapse .

"Really. Humans are really creatures that can’t be saved."

Hard work, good faith, even ideas, the probability of reaching the end following such things was not high. Though the relative importance varied, great numbers of people had experienced such things like defeat, betrayal, or failure in love.

Karian had also experienced these things. Perhaps it was only because he had experienced these things that he was standing here .

If he could, Karian wanted to escape defeat, betrayal, failure in love, and such negative experiences. But it was only because he had such experiences that there was the current Karian.

These defeats definitely hadn't been in vain.

"But, defeat is still very scary."

It was because defeat was very scary that he had prepared so exhaustively. Karian knew that he feared defeat more than anyone.

Though he knew this, he still had begun such a reckless plan.

"......This analysis will become self-praise soon."

After murmuring this, Karian didn't think about Leerin's situation again.

"Well....."

When he shifted his attention, he only saw Stania showing an expression of wanting to say something.

"What is it now?"

"No, the things about Haia's competition are already meaningless."

"Ah, then is it that?'

"Yes. Regardless of whether that guy becomes a Heaven's Blade successor or loses and suffers a huge disgrace, I almost don't care. The question more important than that is who will act as Young Master's bodyguard. My meaning is, Young Master has already dismissed Haia, but we don't have time to choose the next candidate."

"There's no reason."

"Huh?"

"Aren't you still here?"

"Huhh?"

"Frankly, when I asked my family for assistance, I completely didn't think that you would come. More importantly, I also hadn't expected your growth as a Military Artist to have reached this level. If I knew this when I started, perhaps there would have been no reason to employ them."

"Ah, um....."

"......What is it?"

Stania's extremely embarrassed appearance made Karian show a puzzled expression.

"S.....suddenly sayin' something like that would make me real troubled." [2]

"......Stania, your native dialect is coming out."

When Stania's people had lost their city, Karian's father had sheltered them, and employed their whole family.

Every city's language pretty much had their deviations. But from Karian's point of view, the degree to which Stania's city's

language had changed was very large, so there were some areas that were hard for him to understand.

"! S.....so sorry!"

Stania coughed a few times with her whole face red, and after glossing over her slip, she continued speaking as if nothing had happened.

"But, if Young Master suddenly says something like that, I'll feel very troubled."

"I'm only honestly speaking my own thoughts. You've become very strong. Ah, but this is only the opinion of an outsider like me, and if you still feel that there's a reason to hire a guard, we can postpone our leaving to find one....."

"Ah, no..... No!"

"Stania?"

"Please..... please wait a bit."

Stania squatted down holding her head. She was thinking, but what she thought of was this conversation:

"Stania, you want to be Young Master's guard, right?'

"Yes, father, I want to go."

"You want to see Young Master huh, it's already been seven years since we sent him to the bus. You, can you recognize the Young Master?"

"Of course."

"Dear, don't worry about that. How could Stania mistake Young Master."

"Mother!"

"Being shy is useless, everyone knows that you like Young Master."

"Yes yes, that's good."

"Even father!?"

"Though I don't know why, even the masters have approved of Young Master's trip. This might be a long trip. You have to work hard."

"What do you mean by work hard?"

"Obviously I mean for you to seize the opportunity well. That's a special bus, no one else will be there."

"Dear, the driver will be there."

"Oh, then that won't work."

Stania back then had been red-faced and shaking from her anger and shyness. But, as soon as she thought of achieving the situation that those two mouths had proposed, she couldn't help but do the same thing from back then. Perhaps she had already done so, after all she was already crouching on the ground.

(Calm down, calm down..... The situation won't turn into that, don't you know? Young Master is burning with a sense of mission, with no time to notice that kind of thing.)

Yes, so this was nothing.

It was nothing, Stania only wanted to be a guard and that was enough.

(I didn't think of anything weird. Being by myself is enough. I definitely didn't think of anything like getting the driver to leave. Nn, I didn't even think of it.)

"Stania?"

"Ah, y.....yes!"

Noticing Karian calling for her with a suspicious tone, Stania stood up hurriedly, switching to a different frame of mind.

"Don't worry, I can protect Young Master alone."

"Nn, then please do."

"Yes!'

Stania's mood changed. It was already nothing, she was now a serious, calm woman who could match Karian.

She thought this way in her heart, but.....

Stania still couldn't deny that the figure of Karian walking in front of her still made her heart throb.

After that, the situation progressed in the blink of an eye.

Today was the competition to decide the Heaven's Blade successor. This competition was taking place in Grendan's largest arena, and there was an outrageous number of the city's residents gathered.

"Really....."

The chattering of the gathered group filled the entire building, leaving people unable to escape. Haia who was staying in the resting room made an impatient noise.

But, this annoyance had been half-attracted by Haia and the others.

Karian's strategy plan - the project to become known as Inbait's rival had brought together the city's residents, succeeding in preparing the atmosphere to be a showdown between two rivals in the Heaven's Blade successor deciding competition.

Perhaps it was because of this that the Queen had decided the time of the competition to be when Haia had a ten-match winning streak.

From this, Haia had become the candidate who was currently waiting in the resting room for the competition to begin.

"What, this was obviously instigated by that devil, but he just slips away."

Not long before the competition was decided, Karian left the sentence 'the rest is up to you', and then dropped Haia and Myunfa to travel by himself. Thinking of his goal, Haia felt that perhaps the last day of his journey wouldn't happen until the onset of that critical moment.

Though he thought so, letting things go after carrying them out halfway would obviously make one uncomfortable.

Haia could only feel dislike towards conditions where worries had not been eliminated.

"Really....."

What would he do after obtaining a Heaven's Blade? Up to now , Haia still didn't have a definite answer.

Would he confront Layfon? That kind of mindset had long since been resolved by that battle in Zuellni. Haia had lost, and though his desire to become stronger than Layfon had not disappeared, he couldn't really face him, and his feelings of hate had already disappeared.

Then, was it for Ryuhou?

Haia felt that this was the reason. However, would he choose to settle down in Grendan just because of this reason? Receive the torch from Derek, and succeed the Psyharden style?

"Ha!"

Hadn't the issue with the Mercenary Gang already proved that he didn't have the tolerance to be someone at the top guiding other ?

"Damn!"

Why did he have to obtain a Heaven's Blade?

Words that he had lightly thrown out before coming to Grendan had now become heavy, and could no longer be spoken easily.

"Haia, are you okay?"

Myunfa who was also staying in the resting room looked fine. She had recently been looking after Haia's bad mood, and though he felt guilty, her consideration still didn't make Haia's impatience disappear.

".....But, you've always been by my side."

His guilt became words and escaped his mouth.

"Huh?"

The sudden words made Myunfa open her eyes wide without comprehending their meaning.

"Are you about bored now?"

"How could..... of course not."

"Really? I myself feel annoyed, not having a clear attitude makes me hate myself!"

Haia understood that he feared settling down.

His search for reasons was also because he endlessly asked himself whether he could win against his fear of settling down.

Though there were many reasons, when Haia was young and when he was in the Mercenary Gang he was unable to stay in a group. To him, the choice of settling down needed even more determination than entering the battlefield.

Moreover, even to now, Haia hadn't found sufficient reason to give him that determination.

"The reasons that this idiot can get won't be able to convince anyone~"

"Haia....."

"Right."

"Huh?"

A thought suddenly flashed through Haia's mind.

"Myunfa, is there anything you'd want to do if you lived here?"

"Huh? Huh?"

"Ah, it doesn't have to be here~ If you settled down, is there anything you'd want to do?"

"That....."

"Is there?"

"Nn, nn....."

"Let me hear it~"

"But....."

"It's okay, it's okay."

If he didn't have his own reasons, wouldn't it be okay to act based on other people's reasons? Though it was on the spur of the moment, Haia felt that way. Though he said this, just anyone's reasons wouldn't be enough, but if it were Myunfa, perhaps it might not be bad. That kind of thinking naturally emerged in Haia.

"Um....."

"Cmon, let's hear it."

"....."

"Nn?"

"Kindergarten."

"Ah?"

"I want to try being a kindergarten teacher....."

Myunfa lowered her head with her face red, and Haia was taken aback because of that scene.

That dream was far too simple.

But, it was a dream that couldn't be realized without settling down.

Haia had asked this under the assumption of settling down, so obviously that kind of answer would appear, so the word kindergarten didn't make him surprised.

What surprised him was how naturally Myunfa had spoken that answer.

She had definitely thought about this before.

The people in the Mercenary Gang were also like this. When the Queen had informed them that the mission had ended, homesickness had appeared on their faces.

It was an emotion that only those who had settled down would have.

At the time, Haia had felt impatience and jealousy because he didn't have those kinds of feelings. Haia felt fear and anger because those feelings had broken the Mercenary Gang that he had seen as his family, and since he couldn't share those feelings with everyone, it also made the feeling that he was an abnormal being naturally appear in his mind.

Haia had gone out of control because of this, and had suffered defeat in his duel against Layfon, and in the end was expelled from the Mercenary Gang. At the time the only person who followed him was Myunfa.

So, Haia had believed that her desire to settle down wasn't so strong.

(Aah..... Damn!)

He pretty much knew that this had only been his wishful thinking. Myunfa also had those kinds of feelings, and she also dreamed of an ordinary life.

"Kindergarten..... Ah~"

"Th.....that.....I don't really have to.....it's only something I said I want to try."

"Myunfa will definitely be looked down upon by those youngsters, and they'll peek up your skirt~"

"That's saying too much!"

"They'll definitely peek."

"I..... I'm also a Military Artist, I can avoid those small tricks."

"Definitely not~ You definitely can't."

"Th..... Things aren't like that!"

Myunfa felt wronged, and her humorous responses made Haia laugh nonstop.

At that time, a knock on the door sounded.

"C..... Come in."

After responding to the noise, Myunfa opened the door. Standing outside was a woman.

The first thing that greeted the eyes was golden hair that billowed like waves.

"Excuse me, Haia Laia. It's about time, are you prepared?"

Though signs of old age such as wrinkles could be seen, she was still an admirable, beautiful woman. Myunfa who stood next to her looking at her stood there with her mouth frozen.

".....Nn, any time is fine."

After confirming the Dite stored in his weapon pouch, Haia stood up.

Was this woman a competition worker? But Haia hadn't seen anything like an armband on her body.

There was a strange atmosphere in the air.

However, that atmosphere didn't feel annoying.

"Ah....."

Haia had a kind of realization.

"Right, let me ask you, sis."

"What?"

Haia spoke to the woman who was waiting for him to walk out of the room:

"Myunfa said she wants to be a kindergarten teacher, what do you think?"

"Huhh?"

Perhaps because she hadn't foreseen that Haia would say something like this, Myunfa made a surprised sound.

"If it were you, perhaps it would be pretty suitable."

"Huh? Th.....Thank you.....very much."

The other party's serious reply made Myunfa feel confused.

Seeing this scene, Haia confirmed something.

"Then, in order to confirm whether Myunfa will be peeked at, I'll go grab a Heaven's Blade~"

"Haia!"

Haia laughed out loud at the red-eared Myunfa while leaving the resting room.

The woman didn't seem to want to lead the way, only standing in her spot watching Haia walk to the meeting place.

"Haia."

Catching up from behind him, Myunfa lowered her voice and said:

"That woman just now..... She couldn't be....."

"Perhaps."

"Then....."

"If she doesn't want to say it, then I'll stay silent for now."

She should have her own problems.

"Ah, if even Myunfa noticed, it's clear she doesn't really want to hide."

"Ah, um-"

Myunfa didn't know what she should say, and could only continually make quiet noises. After laughing at her being like this, Haia showed a solemn expression.

"If she has reasons, I'll ask, since after all what I want to do now is....."

The meeting place drew closer. Because it had no place to go, vibrations and sounds bounced off each other and became stronger , covering Haia.

They were the cheers of this city's people.

From now on, he had to protect the owners of these cheers.

"I'll take a Heaven's Blade."

After saying this, Haia entered the passageway.

Chapter 2 - The Abandoned City and the Lost Child's Labyrinth

When they arrived at their destination, it was noon on the second day.

Towering in front of them was the city that had stopped moving , and the atmosphere permeating the empty city air made it like looking at ruins, making one's chest fill with a hard-to-describe loneliness.

".....Was it like this before?"

The last time he had come to this deserted city was already something from a year ago.

After comparing his memories from that time, Layfon showed a puzzled expression.

"The place we arrived at this time is different from before, so it's not unusual if the appearance seems different....."

Felli's voice trailed off as she spoke, because she was currently confirming Layfon's perceptions with her Psychokinesis flakes.

"Though there are some differences from the appearance before, other than natural degradation like weathering, I haven't noticed any abnormalities."

"Is..... that so."

"......Until now the air filter has still had some use, but the electricity supply seems somewhat unstable, so we can't completely relax."

"I understand."

Overall, they only had to enter the city to be able to remove their protective suits. Layfon had already gotten used to the air inside the helmet, but he still relaxed once he thought of soon being able to leave the suffocating air.

"Hah."

Felli removed the helmet and sighed, making Layfon very surprised. She was the one who said they couldn't completely relax in this place.

"Felli..... Leave confirming the safety of this place to me."

The air filter couldn't function completely, so the air in this place could have already been tainted by pollutants.

"I already judged that this place is safe! You don't trust me?"

"It's not like that....."

After being glared at, Layfon couldn't say anything.

This was definitely because Felli also wanted to remove her helmet as quickly as possible, and Layfon also removed his helmet. The city was full of new air, making him feel grateful.

After inhaling a breath, Felli once again began gathering information, and Layfon also moved the motorcycle to a place that seemed a bit safer.

"I haven't noticed any place different from before, and there are no filth monsters hiding, and I firmly believe that the city before us is safe."

"......Then, the problem is, where exactly were those battle records placed?"

"Nn..... but, I can probably guess they're over there."

"Huh?"

"There are traces in the central part of the city that there might have once been an extremely huge building standing there. Judging from the position, it's not hard to speculate that it was a building quite similar to Zuellni's large Student Council building."

"......If there are important records, they'll definitely be there?"

"Yes."

"Then....."

"Nn, let's go."

After nodding to each other, the two of them advanced to the center.

Advancing through the city without people.

"But actually, this place is quite tranquil."

"Isn't that obvious? Because there isn't anyone here except for us ."

"Eh, it's not only that....."

Layfon didn't know what to say, raising his head to look at the sky. The sky was clear, blue to a degree that didn't match this kind of situation. Perhaps it was because the concentration of pollutants was very low, Layfon thought, feeling that it also had to do with the air filter being very thin.

Even if there were no filth monsters here, the air filter could suddenly break down, so they definitely couldn't let their guard down in the current situation.

".....It probably has to do with there being no footsteps of the city."

"Is that so."

Felli also looked over there. The legs that would no longer move and had lost their control were covered with vegetation, so they didn't look like metal, but rather seemed like rotting trees standing tall, surrounding Layfon and Felli from all directions.

".....Delbone was born in this city?"

Layfon had already known that she had been born in a different city. But long before Layfon had been born, Delbone had already

been a Heaven's Blade successor. The current Layfon stood in her hometown. Thinking of this, Layfon couldn't help but feel a strange feeling inside him.

But, this was really just a feeling. She had her own history, and her history could perhaps help Layfon draw closer to the truth.

"I didn't learn of any details of her background from the information she gave to me."

Felli walked next to Layfon while saying this:

"But considering her abilities and the related portion of the central district, I can surmise that she also enjoyed a high position in this city."

"......Did this place perish while Delbone still stayed in this city?"

"We should carry out an investigation to know the answer."

The crumbling streets extended endlessly in front of them. Buildings that had been crushed from above appeared one after another, and these buildings made Layfon have doubts. These buildings were mixed with the other collapsed buildings, and picking them out wasn't easy, but Layfon noticed that the buildings that had collapsed in this strange manner seemed as if they drew a straight line one after another towards the central district that Layfon and Felli were advancing towards.

"Do you know what's going on with this?"

"I guess these have been crushed flat by some giant, or were crushed by some object, I'm uncertain. If they were crushed by filth monsters, then their condition wouldn't be so neat. If they were the work of a giant, it hasn't left any traces, which makes me very curious."

"I can't understand the situation at all."

"So true."

Felli showed a displeased expression, and Layfon didn't relax his alertness towards the surroundings.

Though he had had this feeling before, something about this place really wasn't right.

Layfon's feelings back then were very fuzzy, and the friction with Gorneo and Shante's self-asserted provocations made that kind of feeling even harder to grasp.

But perhaps, when the truth of the obscure feeling revealed itself for the first time, the two of them would make a clear judgment.

Right now, Layfon matched Felli's speed and slowly advanced. If Layfon carried her and leaped, they could reach their destination in the blink of an eye, but.....

"....."

".....What's wrong?"

Layfon moved his hands to his chest and stopped, and this action made Felli ask him in a surprised tone.

"Ah, nothing....."

".....Anyway, the central district is still a bit away."

"Right."

"After all, there seems to be no dangers in this place, and asking Fon Fon to carry me there seems a bit faster."

"......R.....right, that's true."

The words from Felli's mouth were exactly the same as the proposal that Layfon was about to say to her.

Though it was exactly the same.....

"What's wrong?"

His body refused to continue moving.

"Huh..... Eh..... Eh....."

Layfon moved his arms in front of him, bending them a few times, and extended his fingers. His hand moved, no problems. Nowhere in his body did that sudden occurrence happen again.

"What are you doing with those weird movements? Whatever, we'll advance after a careful investigation from a distance."

"S..... sorry."

Layfon followed behind Felli, his entire body feeling small.

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(.....Huh?)

Layfon looked at his hands, tilting his head and showing a confused expression. His hands moved without problems. There was nothing wrong. Layfon moved his fingers, confirmed his elbow joints, turned his wrists..... there weren't any problems anywhere.

In that case, why had his body suddenly stopped moving?

"That's strange?"

"What?"

"Ah, no..... nothing."

".....Can you stop muttering?"

"Um, sorry."

Knowing that Felli's mood had become bad, Layfon felt even smaller.

But, the event just now might be a very big problem.

His body had become strange when Layfon planned on touching Felli. Though he didn't know the reason, there was an obvious effect, and it was only after Layfon planned to do so that his body had become how it did.

Was it touching Felli that had made Layfon unconsciously hesitate?

(Why?)

He didn't know.

(Um...?)

What had happened until today? Layfon tried recalling.

Since Felli had succeeded in the autumn in analyzing Delbone's heritage, Layfon had passed his days and nights training.

He had not been surreptitious, and had been openly carrying out his training throughout. Layfon didn't know when he would come to this city, so he had set completing the Composite Blast move as his target, continuing to accumulate training and experience.

Because Layfon had lived that kind of life, he almost hadn't spoken with Nina or Claribel, even Felli. Layfon's most common conversation partner might have been Harley. In order to improve the Dites' capabilities, he had given his assistance to the best of his abilities.

The achievements were now stored in Layfon's weapon belt.

"It's almost time."

Even now, Layfon could recall Kirik's both resigned and terrified face as he said that.

(Nn...?)

Layfon had passed every day with that kind of feeling, and he didn't know the reason why he had suddenly hesitated when he was about to touch Felli.

(Aah, really. Why is it?)

The difficult feeling made Layfon feel a bit impatient. Even looking at her petite figure made him feel discomfort.

Perhaps as an effect of his mood, Layfon's response was a bit slow, even though it was a very slight difference.

A strange sound came from above.

"! Felli!"

As if overlapping with the sound, a shadow covered his feet. Layfon dashed forward as if he were charging out of the shadow to grab Felli in his arms.

"Fon!"

Felli's voice passed by his ears, and then gradually disappeared. Layfon ran without looking, and behind him an explosion rang out .

Layfon leaped as if he were being propelled by the pressure of the explosion, and then touched down on the ground.

"Are you okay?"

After asking this, Layfon looked at Felli in his arms, whose face had lost its color.

"I'm..... okay."

Though she said so, the expression on her face was quite abnormal.

A tear had appeared in the right shoulder of the protective suit. The debris flying around there had definitely grazed that area.

"Ugh....."

Seeing her shoulder that had started bleeding, Layfon clenched his teeth.

"Filth monsters.....? How could that be, until just now there were no responses at all....."

Felli uttered a confused voice from his arms, and her voice exuded the atmosphere of her bearing the pain.

Before them was a filth monster like a giant.

"This thing....."

Layfon had seen it.

"I saw this in Zuellni....."

Felli made a hoarse sound. Was it because of surprise, or pain?

This filth monster possessed four limbs just like a human, but only a head portion that was squashed flat like a small hill of flesh, and on that head there was only a single mouth. A ball inside its chest endlessly rotated, and one couldn't help but think that it was an organ for sensory perceptions.

It seemed exactly the same as the giants that had attacked Zuellni before.

"I didn't expect these things to be here..... as expected, something is hidden here."

".....Please wait a bit."

"Fon Fon?"

There was only a single giant. After confirming that there were no signs of additional enemies, Layfon gently put Felli down.

"I'll settle things quickly, then treat your wounds."

"O.....Okay....."

Layfon stationed himself in front of Felli, and drew out the Sapphire Dite from his weapon belt, grasping it firmly in his hand.

Layfon didn't restore the Dite, just charging at the giant.

The giant roared.

It grasped the haft of a roughly sharpened weapon that could only be described as a pillar in its hands, and then swung it down aimed at Layfon.

Layfon avoided the blow with the smallest movement.

A strong wind blew past his cheek, and sparks burst out along the defensive Kei along his body. Layfon swept the Dite still in its unrestored state out horizontally.

"......Restoration."

The light of restoration shone in all directions. The light gathered, and along with the Kei that Layfon sent out solidified into a blade.

The razor-sharp blade took form in front of the giant's abdomen , tearing its flesh.

Psyharden Technique - Impromptu Scorpion Strike.

This was a move to cut apart the enemy's weapon by pouring a consistent flow of Kei into the unrestored Dite and having it maintain the form of a razor-thin blade. Though it was only momentary, for a split-second the blade would take a transcendent form, and the cut paths would become complex and chaotic because of this.

Moreover though this was only a single strike, it could result in the giant being drawn and quartered.

When the Kei that allowed the Dite to take shape was liberated, it would produce an extreme heat. The pieces of the giant that the strike left would be burned to a crisp because of this extreme heat.

In a moment, the giant disappeared into nothing. Layfon acted as if he hadn't even seen it, returning the Dite to its original form and walking back to Felli's side.

"Let's look for somewhere safe to treat you."

"O.....Okay. Then....."

Layfon carried the somewhat confused Felli, running quickly towards the place she indicated.

Under Felli's guidance, Layfon entered a relatively intact building.

"We have to treat the wound quickly....."

After taking the medical kit from his supplies, Layfon put his hands on Felli's clothes.

"Hey! What are you doing?"

"What do you mean, what am I doing, let me see your wound quickly."

"I know that, but I can do this kind of thing myself!"

"Huh? Ah..... Aah!"

Felli's cheeks were red to an obvious degree, and seeing her response, Layfon realized what he was doing.

He hurriedly removed the hand on Felli's shoulder.

This movement seemed as if he were trying to tear Felli's clothes off.

(No, that's actually it. But, I did it for treating the wound, I wasn't thinking anything like that.....)

Layfon voiced his reasons inside his heart, but his mouth could only tremble, unable to form those reasons into words.

"Never mind it, please face that way!"

Suffering Felli's loud anger, Layfon quickly turned his back to her, and jumped through the large hole in that wall, moving to the room next door.

In here, even if a situation happened, he could quickly take action.

"Really....."

Felli mumbled this, and this word made Layfon shrink his body and hold his head in his hands.

(Aah, really! What am I doing?)

A sad mood entered his body, making Layfon painfully think of rolling around on the ground. Worrying about Felli's response was unavoidable, but just like what had happened just now, Layfon hadn't been able to take calm and correct actions.

(I should say I can't really understand what I'm doing.)

One moment thinking that he couldn't touch Felli, and suddenly taking her clothes off in the next.....

(No, I only wanted to help her, but..... But!)

As expected, Layfon hadn't kept his calm. If they were outside the city, her wound would need instant treatment, and the clothing would have to be repaired, or she might die from it. But in the end this place was inside the city, so there was no reason to be that frantic.

Not only this, the battle with the giant just now was the same. Though Felli had received a wound, Layfon had let anger affect him too easily.

Yes, he had gotten angry.

He didn't think getting angry was very strange. Though he said so, hadn't he been too angry?

(It's really strange.)

Layfon couldn't understand himself.

Why would things be like this..... Suddenly making that baffling sort of overreaction?

".....What are you doing?"

Felli asked from the other side of the wall, and Layfon almost jumped from surprise.

"Wh.....What do you mean?"

"Your weird movements are way too obvious, can you please not do things half-heartedly?"

"Um....."

The almost emotionless tone like usual made Layfon unable to say anything.

"Your actions these past few months are strange in a few ways."

"S.....Since that long ago?"

Felli traced back even farther than Layfon had thought about just now.

"It only started after I finished analyzing Delbone's heritage. Though you were very concentrated on training, it reduced your time with everyone in the apartment."

"T.....True."

"Your reason for concentrating on training isn't strange. But your manner towards someone else while you were training was very strange."

"....."

"......If you don't want to talk about it, I won't ask."

If this much had already been said, Layfon couldn't take a half-hearted tone and say something like 'I don't know what you're talking about'.

'Someone else' obviously meant Meishen. Regarding this, Layfon truly couldn't say anything, not even a blatant lie like ' nothing's wrong'.

Truthfully, if he only met Meishen by accident, an awkward atmosphere would arise between the two of them. In order to avoid that kind of situation, both sides deliberately pretended that everything was normal, but even they both knew that their action wasn't so good.

Though they hadn't talked, both of them felt that they could only let time settle their hearts, so the outcome was that they tried to avoid seeing each other.

They didn't know how Felli or Nina who lived in the same apartment building would see this.

(Umm.....)

When he thought of how he had been totally seen through, Layfon felt shamed to death.

(No.....)

Layfon held his head, thinking.

Hadn't Layfon experienced being shamed to death many times before for various reasons, and been corrected by Felli every time?

(I've really been seen through.)

It wasn't like Felli was using Psychokinesis to monitor Layfon twenty-four hours a day. In other words, Layfon was completely exposed in front of Felli's sharp observation, and Layfon was undoubtedly someone seen through easily.

".....I can't hide any secrets in front of Felli."

"How rude, are you trying to say that I'm monitoring you?"

"It.....It's not like that. But, that kind of thing has truly happened several times....."

"That's because....."

"Because.....?"

Felli was speaking vaguely.

"Because of what?"

"Because you showed such an obviously idiotic expression, anyone would see it."

"Ugh....."

Receiving Felli's counter, Layfon couldn't raise his head.

"Really....."

In the end, how many times had she said that by now? Felli spoke what she had spoken many times before as she stared at the other side of the wall.

(Why doesn't he know?)

Felli's feelings had been extremely tense when she noticed the situation between him and her. Would there be a day when he would understand those feelings?

(I think that day probably won't come.)

Felli had also thought about the other possibility.

Perhaps Layfon had received Meishen's confession, and had only shown that kind of attitude in front of everyone because he was shy.

Perhaps the awe-inspiring determination that he had let Felli see in the hospital was a determination that he had made for Meishen.

After calmly observing the situation, Felli made the conclusion that these situations were impossible. However, discomfort still remained in Felli's heart for a long time, refusing to dissipate.

Felli really wanted to grab his collar and yell: 'Do you understand these feelings?'

"....."

But, she hadn't done that, and couldn't do it.

Felli hated Meishen from the bottom of her heart, and was jealous and envious of her.

Because Felli still didn't have that kind of courage.

After treating Felli's wound and repairing her clothing, Layfon once again set out with Felli.

"Then, shall we move over there in a leap?"

"No, it's alright."

Layfon could leap to the central district in a breath if he carried Felli. Layfon once again made this proposal, but Felli gave a negative answer.

"Huh? Then....."

"There are those creatures here, and I don't think the enemy's attacks will end like that."

"Nn, so I feel that quickly getting to the central district and finishing our investigation as soon as possible is a bit....."

"No, the enemies can penetrate my Psychokinesis, and I care about this a lot. If the opponent already knows what we're trying, there's a possibility that they are hiding in wait for us to fall into their trap. Right now, we should carefully advance."

"....I see."

Felli's views were correct. But for some unknown reason, Layfon wanted to disagree with her words, and his chest began to hurt.

But, she was right.

This was enemy territory. Taking action based on this knowledge was obviously better. Even Layfon had not determined the moment when that giant had appeared. If they were the same kind of giant as the ones that had fought with Nina in the empty city and could separate into fine particles, then there were no safe places here.

(Now isn't the time to be distracted by strange things.)

Layfon directed his consciousness into battle mode. Doing this should remove his superfluous thoughts, reaching his goal of a focused mind.

But still, why had that giant been here?

That giant was the same as the creatures that had attacked Zuellni. From its level of strength, it was probably weaker than a stage one mature phase. If they attacked in the same numbers as they had in Zuellni, it would be very difficult to cope with. But, if they came one or two at a time, and more importantly fought inside the city where they weren't limited by protective clothing, they wouldn't fall into an unfavorable situation if they weren't careless.

Layfon wasn't concerned about this, but rather the fact that they possessed the same shape.

Regardless of whether it was a male phase or female phase, or if it were a larvae, the form of such a strange creature wouldn't appear.

The forms of mature phases were manifold, and Layfon had never seen mature phases whose forms were completely the same.

Though the creatures that had attacked Zuellni and the creatures they had fought in the empty city were giants of different forms, if they attacked with a group of the same creatures, it could

be interpreted that they were a group that had gone through the same growth process.

But, it couldn't be like that. Entering battle at different times but meeting the exact same form of enemy, wasn't that very strange?

In conclusion, perhaps the judgment that these creatures were filth monsters was wrong.

The giants weren't filth monsters?

Layfon had once pondered this, and perhaps that was the answer.

He couldn't obtain any definitive evidence.

If someone knew, he hoped that the other party would tell him the answer.

"After all, what kind of things are we fighting against?"

"......Huh?"

"I mean the enemies; even now I can't really make sense of it."

"We came here to investigate that."

"That's true."

Felli's answer was very indifferent, so Layfon could only make an ambiguous response. He felt that he seemed to have spoken about this with Felli before, so perhaps she didn't want to hear this conversation over and over.

However, Layfon still involuntarily thought about it.

He pondered endlessly.

The enemy had come before him before. Though the enemy just now had shown the form of a giant, it wasn't the true enemy.

Layfon truly couldn't understand this feeling.

In all of the battles since Layfon had come from Grendan to Zuellni, no, even before that, in all of his Military Artist battles, he had fought with filth monsters and other opponents that were menaces that existed in front of his eyes.

Filth monsters didn't hide anything, they were simply enemies that existed on the surface. There were no schemes hidden among them.

Though the battles between cities were against the same type of city and were regulated by laws and positions, they were also almost all carried out in the form of skirmishes, so they weren't much different from fights against filth monsters.

'Enemies in front of their eyes'.

Layfon and the Military Artists only knew these kinds of battles .

On the road in front of the battle was still the reason that had brought the battle about, and behind the menace in front of them was still the being that had sent that menace. Layfon wasn't used to this way of thinking, so couldn't think of this as realistic at all.

(Who's the enemy, what's the enemy, if only I knew this answer. .....)

Perhaps it was a bit different.

Nina was also a Military Artist, and her way of looking at things should be similar to Layfon's.

Even so, she was not at a loss.

Was this because she could see the enemies? If it were like this, the confusion in Layfon's heart should also disappear, right?

(That would be good.)

To Layfon, these feelings amounted to his desires.

"......Things aren't going too smoothly."

After walking for a bit, Felli murmured this.

"What is it?"

"I'm searching for enemies. From what happened before, I surmise that the opponent should be a collective being of tiny particles, and I'm searching with that theory as my foundation, but it's not going too smoothly."

"Meaning that Psychokinesis can't find this enemy either?"

"If our enemy can make Psychokinesis fail, I should have a peculiar feeling that I normally don't experience, but I don't have such a feeling. Still, if the enemies are giving me fake information instead of the truth, I should also have an unnatural feeling, but I don't have such a feeling."

Felli murmured this, balling her hands into fists.

(Ahh.....)

The search not going smoothly made her feel impatient.

After understanding this, Layfon felt slightly more comfortable. Obviously, nothing good had come of the situation because of this.

"How annoying."

Felli continued murmuring:

"If this goes on, we won't be able to safely investigate the central district."

"Right."

They didn't know how much time they would have to spend on the investigation. Moreover, in the situation where they didn't know when enemies would attack, even Felli couldn't keep her focus.

"What should we do? Should we prepare somewhere, and wait for safety to be confirmed before continuing our investigation?"

"That..... Layfon, you decide."

"Huh? Huhh?"

"Regardless of which choice you pick, it's true that we have no way to affirm it. Therefore, it should be you who makes the decision."

Because the person who decided to come here was you. The meaning in Felli's words made Layfon feel resistance.

"Um, well....."

Layfon was very troubled. Though he was troubled, what Felli said was correct, so he had to make the decision.

"Then, today we'll first watch the situation, and if it doesn't improve we'll set out again for the central district, how's that?"

"I feel that judgment is very indecisive."

"Wu!"

"But, putting safety as the first priority and bringing about zero results is also problematic. Setting a deadline is an appropriate judgment."

"Then, you didn't need to say that....."

"What I wanted to say was, even if your judgment was appropriate, your mentality with which you made the choice was indecisive."

Perhaps it was truly like that.

She had truly seen through him. Layfon felt that he had broken out in a cold sweat.

In the end, they hadn't advanced much distance today. Layfon and Felli again found a place that looked safe to rest, but Felli's search didn't seem to have any progress.

For a safeguard, Layfon scattered steel threads throughout the surroundings, creating a defensive formation for contingencies.

Afterwards, Layfon didn't have anything to do. Felli was focusing her mind to carry out her search, giving off an atmosphere that said not to talk to her. But, Layfon had already grown tired of the thoughts circling inside him. Layfon already knew the answer. He had to witness what was in the destination he would advance towards. It was for this that he was here. He could only repeat this. So, he planned to think about it as little as possible, but when he had nothing to do, he involuntarily pondered about it.

Layfon's tense feeling hadn't subsided. But, even if he was in a tense state, he could still think about things. After all, if he maintained his tense state for a long time, his mood would have to relax to some degree, and the tense feeling would have no way of continuing on.

If he didn't use the time to explore himself, was there anything else he could do? In the end, all he could do was imagine things, and Layfon raised his head to look at the deserted city gradually being dyed with the colors of the sunset.

This place seemed to be a private residence. The windows were broken, and wind blew strongly into the room. After turning to the side and looking at Felli who was sitting on the sofa in meditation, Layfon leaned on the window frame that he had knocked the glass shards out of, gazing at the scenery outside.

The many colors of the sunset made Layfon think of flame, making him recall memories of when he had visited an abandoned city before. At the time, a moving city had appeared near the only selenium mine that Zuellni possessed. In order to investigate the situation, Nina and others of the seventeenth platoon along with Gorneo's platoon had come to that deserted region.

Gorneo was born in Grendan, and was the little brother of the Heaven's Blade successor Savaris Luckens. At the same time he was a disciple of Gahard Baren who had exposed Layfon's crimes. He held hatred for Layfon, and Shante had responded to this hatred and gone out of control, and the two of them had begun a fight because of this. [3]

This creature hadn't appeared at that time, why had it waited till now to appear?

When had it come here? Was it here from long ago, or from after that?

His memories let doubts flicker through his mind while they floated towards the battle between Layfon and Gorneo.

Currently, Layfon's memories and the thoughts before him had been dyed in the same color.

"Right, it's really strange."

"What is it?"

Felli opened her eyes and looked at Layfon.

"I'm talking about this city, it's really strange."

"We knew it was very strange since the beginning."

"No..... not like that....."

If even Felli hadn't noticed it, that meant..... No, at the time she had been knocked out by Shante, so perhaps she hadn't been able to grasp the entire situation.

"Please explain."

"It's the air filter, it shouldn't be still working."

"Huh?"

"Do you remember the time when we came here before? At the time an explosion occurred, it was in the Mechanical Department of the city."

"Ah....."

Layfon's words brought out Felli's recollections.

Layfon had fought with Shante, and that battle had combusted the liquefied selenium in the city's Mechanical Department.

The reason that Layfon and the others were safe even after being next to the explosion was because of precautions, because the Mechanical Department had safety equipment to avoid igniting the selenium flowing inside the tubes, and they had worked efficiently. But there was another reason before this that they had turned out safe, which was that the amount of remaining liquefied selenium in storage was very low.

The city had obviously lost the last of its energy due to the explosion, so the air filter shouldn't be working anymore. Even if there was still some energy left behind, with such a large hole opened in the walls of the Mechanical Department, it was very difficult to imagine that the air filter could continue working under these circumstances.

More importantly, and Felli had also said this, the city's exterior was about the same as before. Felli had forgotten about the explosion from that time.

"Then, this city is....."

He was in front of Felli who was showing a confused look. In order not to miss any small changes, Layfon pushed his consciousness to its limits.

"Though I don't understand how, someone has repaired this city, making it into the same appearance from that time."

There were enemies here, and they should know that Layfon and Felli were already somewhat aware.

"For what reason?"

"That..... How would I know!"

Layfon moved with the speed of a Military Artist, reaching his arms out to grab Felli who was making a confused look, and then carried her.

He leaped up high.

The steel threads in front of him separated the ceiling of the ruins, releasing Layfon and Felli into the sky.

The ground beneath him mutated. The surrounding building and ground began to crumble, preparing to become that giant.

".....If they're things like tiny particles, and they can really become anything....."

Layfon moved the defensive formation of steel threads, and Felli murmured from his arms:

"If this kind of substance replaced the functions of this abandoned city, if it reappears....."

The giants that appeared under them were easily cut apart by the defensive formation of steel threads, but Layfon who listened to Felli's words could only feel his hair standing on end.

His surroundings could all be these kinds of giants.

Meaning that the two were already inside the belly of those creatures.

Vati raised her eyebrows. Her mimicry program had successfully improved its capabilities, and she could finally make this kind of expression with almost no delay or errors.

However, the occasion when she made this expression was a bit off.

"Is it not good?"

"No, it's quite tasty."

"Really?"

"There's nothing wrong."

Vati was sampling Meishen's new products. It was truly very difficult to appease Meishen who was showing an uncomfortable expression. The next step after being able to make these expressions was to improve the calculation on when to suppress this expression. Vati though about this while she sampled Meishen's new products.

It was only this that she still couldn't assess, even today. Human mannerisms were quite difficult, and there weren't any completely correct responses.

It was currently nightfall.

There weren't many people who came here, and because of this, there weren't many people who came directly to the store, and the ones who did were almost all friends who lived in the apartment building. In this situation, Meishen should be able to be comfortable as she confirmed the taste of her new products.

But actually, she had already stood back up again several times. Judging from her expression, the smile that Meishen directed towards Vati wasn't fake.

More importantly, this could also be judged from her conversations with her good friends, Mifi and Naruki.

The time..... was probably approaching.

If she thought about it, the action of taste-testing was almost meaningless. However, Vati didn't give it up because it was meaningless.

Vati had made the conclusion that humans couldn't make decisions relying on everything. At least, this was true for the ' humanity' that Lævateinn wished for. Because what she yearned for wasn't human on an academic level, but the emotional side of human. She wanted to extract humanity from the entirety of humankind. Though that kind of action was strange, she who was a machine proceeded almost without any doubts.

Though was she a Nano-Celluloid mechanical being, ever since Lævateinn had the opportunity to think independently and was able to try living, she could only set that as her target.

"Nn? The smell seems a little too strong."

Meishen also tried the cake herself. Vati responded to her mumble while solving a different problem.

It was the problem occurring in the abandoned city.

The moon had once succeeded in connecting with this world a long time ago, and at the time Vati had seized the chance to send herself over to this side of the world in that city that had once existed.

'Once existed'. The reason for the use of past tense was justified.

Though Vati had sent herself into this world in parts, she hadn't gathered enough information, and a fight had broken out with the city's Military Artists on the connected side, and the city had been destroyed.

Because the connection had also been severed, Vati judged that she couldn't continue acting at that stage, so she stopped preparing to execute her battle plans of that time. When she had successfully invaded this world, she hadn't confirmed whether her other portions had survived.

However, that copy still lived.

Since it was rendered into a dormant state, Vati hadn't noticed its existence with her information-gathering until now. However, this portion had entered a living state because they had gotten close, and had come in contact with Vati's information network.

With regard to this copy that would be tentatively called 'Vati B' , Vati planned to first come in contact with it, because she wanted to know what had happened in the period where the connection was broken, and also planned on taking the copy back, placing it back under her control.

They had charged out of Zuellni to gather information using their own methods, so Vati planned on obstructing the two. If possible, Vati wanted them to follow some guidelines.

('Vati B', this is the Nano-Celluloid Interface 1 Lævateinn. Report the situation immediately.)

Vati took Meishen's cake to an area of the store without any customer presence, and drank tea while using a commanding tone to contact the other party.

However, the other party's response was outside of her expectations.

(.....Kschk.....)

(Please respond, 'Vati B'.)

(Interface 1.....Szhhkc.)

There were sounds mixed in with the communication. In this situation, there shouldn't be any factors interfering with the communication, this was quite strange.

(Have your replaced your functions? First receive the specifications of communication here.)

(.....Khhsch, Interface 1. Answer me, why do you want to stop the war?)

(That is the judgment that I made with my own special data. You only need to cooperate with me to understand everything.)

There shouldn't have even been a reason to carry out this kind of communication. Because the other party was a copy of her, she shouldn't be able to resist the original body Vati.

However, to allow the copy to continue gathering information in the case that communication was cut, Vati had given it

jurisdiction, and perhaps this jurisdiction had led to independence over the course of the copy's evolution. Even if it faced the instructions of Vati who was in a higher position, 'Vati B' still stubbornly limited the communication that Vati could have with its core.

(I refuse this proposal. Interface 1, if you don't carry out the battle plans, I will replace you.)

(Wait, that's impossible with your authority and power)

(No, Interface 1. For this day, I have improved myself until now , and it's definitely not impossible.)

'Vati B's response was very stubborn, and Vati continuously tried to enter the other party's core from the small channel of communication, seeing whether she could take back control. However, before she could obtain results, communication had already been sealed off completely.

"Vati..... What's wrong?"

".....Nn? Is there something?"

"You're kind of dazed, are you uncomfortable?"

"No, it's nothing. Rather, was I really dazed?"

"Nn, you were staring at your cup without moving. .....Is something bothering you?"

"No, I....."

Bothering..... Troublesome problems popped up one after another, but it wasn't suitable for what Meishen had said.

Just as Vati was speaking vaguely, Meishen's gaze moved. Something outside the store captured her attention, so she prepared to move her gaze to chase after it, but she again noticed that she had seen wrongly and felt disappointed. That was exactly the expression that Meishen showed.

Vati didn't have any reason to turn around, since there was nothing there. But, the shadows from the faraway sun on the city's legs had moved quickly, so she had wrongly thought that there was someone entering from the front.

Meishen sighed, and showed an expression on her face that was first lonely and then mixed with a pained smile. Vati felt sorry for what she saw from Meishen's body, so although she knew there was nothing there, Vati still turned her head.

"Where has he gone?"

Meishen's words that came from behind her meant Layfon and Felli. Two days ago, Layfon and Felli had disappeared.

Nina and the others probably had asked Harley about everything that had happened, but hadn't admitted things to Meishen.

Was it consideration because they didn't want Meishen to worry? But even if they were unwilling, Meishen who lived in the same apartment could feel that there was an uncomfortable atmosphere.

However, though Vati knew where Layfon was, she didn't tell Meishen about it. Perhaps her mentality was about the same as Nina and the others.

Layfon leaped high up, and below his feet, giants emerged one after another.

"This is....."

The belly of the beast..... Layfon had thought about this, but the amazement produced by actually seeing this scene still made him feel like his whole body was numb.

The surrounding half-ruined buildings crashed down one after another, and the rubble that was scattered along the road began to crumble, and the road itself began to slowly disintegrate.

Afterwards they coalesced, took form, separating into many, and became giants.

One after another, one after another.

Like the emergence of larvae.

"Ugh!"

Layfon who was leaping while carrying Felli confirmed the feeling of the defensive formation holding back the giants below him while he spread the steel threads through the whole city.

He couldn't land anywhere. If he didn't stay in the air..... After thinking this, Layfon began deploying his steel threads high in the air. On close areas like tall buildings, and far areas like the city's legs, Layfon bound his steel threads on these areas, as if spreading a dense network like a spiderweb.

Particularly the legs outside of the city, if he wrapped his steel threads around those areas, then regardless of where he moved, he could be sure that he had a foothold for movement.

"Felli, please confirm the si.....!"

The feeling of running on the steel threads suddenly changed, and Layfon stopped talking to look at that place.

The city's leg.

"How....."

Giants had emerged by the city's leg. A giant who only had half of its upper body growing out of its legs grabbed the steel threads wrapped around there, and attempted to pull Layfon over.

"Damn!"

Layfon made other steel threads move over and sweep aside the giant.

"You won't let me stay stable?"

If he looked at it that way, giants could appear anywhere in the city. Moreover, if the opponents were collective bodies formed by fine particles, then it wouldn't be strange for them to be able to grab the thin steel threads.

"If this goes on, I don't know when the air filter will be disabled. Felli, please be ready to wear the helmet at any time."

"O.....Okay."

Layfon listened to Felli's tense voice while he scattered the steel threads in as many directions as possible. Though everything in his vision continued endlessly producing giants, the city didn't look like it was collapsing.

However, the exterior of the city was definitely changing.

The rubble and wreckage scattered everywhere was slowly disappearing as if flowing into sand. This substance gathered together to form a giant, the wreckage and rubble disappearing to slowly expose the city in front of Layfon and Felli.

The first thing that greeted their eyes was machinery that was wrapped up tightly with vine-like objects. However, even this machinery began to slowly loosen, becoming full of holes.

Under the holes could be seen the foundations and reinforcements of the city.

"The city's bones....."

Layfon couldn't see everything from his position. However, the small portion that he could see had already turned to this state, and this condition was still spreading outwards, as if the moving city - the Regios - was rapidly decaying; it also seemed as if the city was becoming a different creature.

The bones were also like a skeletal monster that would appear in a horror movie.

The being who commanded the monsters was also a monster.

In order not to fall into the holes, the giants maintained a neat formation while moving, pursuing Layfon who raced through the sky.

"This is..... a trap?"

Had he and Felli fallen into a trap?

But, who had set the trap, and why?

"That's impossible, no way."

"I know."

Even if he was rebutted by Felli, Layfon could only think that was how things were. Even now, Layfon and Felli still didn't understand anything. There was no reason to attack the two of them.

In the end, this was a conclusion obtained from Delbone's memories. Doubting this conclusion would be the same as doubting Delbone, which was something that Layfon personally couldn't do.

However, the two of them had indeed fallen into a predicament.

"I fear that this is the monster in Delbone's memories."

"It still lives?"

"It can only be explained that way."

"What do we do?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"I'm talking about the thing we want to get, do you think it's still here?"

"It seems more appropriate to think it's no longer here, but then....."

"......That's true."

If it wasn't here, then the efforts of Layfon and Felli would have been for nothing. Even if there wasn't any other clue they could rely on, if they let go of this chance, they could only look to negotiate with Nina.

But, Nina had already decided, and Layfon didn't think she would speak the truth.

"Damn, in this kind of place....."

Layfon stopped his steps. In the situation where he hadn't been able to complete anything, could he obtain Nina's confidence? In the battles for which they had to become strong to such a degree, what could Layfon do?

With a mindset that was practically at a standstill, who could he do anything for?

"Fon Fon..... Layfon, please calm down."

"Felli."

"It's still too early to decide that it doesn't exist."

Felli's tense words and the expression with which she said this didn't feel comforting.

"I'll try finding it. Layfon, can you make it?"

"......Of course."

Layfon quickly spoke, surprising even himself.

"However many there are, as long as I have a reason, I'll defeat all of these things."

If by this he could reach his destination.

"I'm counting on you."

Layfon felt the load on his back go still, and a joyful feeling ran through his body.

Felli had not taken his words as a joke, and that made Layfon feel happy.

He hadn't planned to say his words just now as a joke or in passing. If he had a reason, if he could arrive at his goal...

If it was possible.

Layfon scampered on top of the web of steel threads he had woven.

The giants that appeared from all directions tried pulling down the steel threads, and though Layfon took measures to repel the giants, his defense couldn't be said to be watertight.

Because of this, the steel threads lost their tension countless times, and Layfon almost fell to the ground.

Even so, he still ran continuously. Though Layfon was above the giants, if he stopped too long in one place, perhaps they would use some trick to deal with him.

Just as Layfon was thinking about this, his worries became reality.

The low howl of wind made Layfon stop his steps. Before Layfon even moved his gaze there, he had already used his steel threads to spread a defensive formation under his feet.

"Ugh!"

The feeling sent by the steel threads was quite intense. Several objects crashed into the shield, which fell apart from that power.

Among them, one penetrated the defensive formation.

Layfon avoided it, using his steel threads to capture that thing.

".....A spear?"

Layfon murmured this after powerfully blocking the object that was going to pierce his body and confirming it.

Its shape was quite simple, as if it were a stick with the front sharpened, but the mass that it contained was quite surprising, and along with the force at which it had moved, it hurt the arm that had received the shock sent by the steel threads.

Layfon looked down.

The giants over there had raised one arm pointing at Layfon.

However, their arms were not the same as before. Their five fingers had become abnormally large, and in their open palms was opened a large hole.

The spears had been shot out from that place?

"Damn!"

Layfon ran again. In the time when he was looking at this scene, the number of giants with their arms raised had increased. Layfon confirmed with his own eyes the momentary swelling of their arms, and a hole also appeared in their palms.

Boom!

Countless spears pierced through the space where Layfon had just been, flying into the distance. With help from Layfon's Kei, the steel threads were bent with so much force that they barely held, and launched Layfon.

"Aaah!"

Felli's scream shook his body. Layfon twisted his body in the air , manipulating the steel threads. He once again set down a foothold for himself, and swept away the spears that had penetrated the defensive formation while sweeping the steel threads to check the giants at the same time.

The spears shot out endlessly as if they were pursuing the moving Layfon. It could be described as a fountain, or perhaps a rainstorm.

Layfon ran.

When Layfon had fought with Derek in Grendan, he had used creatures falling from the sky as footholds. Layfon was only running on footholds that he had not completely fixed, but ones still made by his own steel threads, which was much better than that time.

But, the difference with back then was that now he was carrying Felli. The body of a Psychokinesist was about the same as other people. Since the strength of their body couldn't endure the high speed of a Military Artist, Layfon couldn't run continuously like that.

So, Layfon stopped his movement. He had to stage a lower-speed battle.

The spears gathered into a pillar.

This time it wasn't a metaphor.

Every spear shot out from the giants merged together, fusing, combining into one heading for Layfon.

"Tch!"

A collision in midair couldn't break the steel threads. A strong attempt to crush him would cause him to be cut apart by his own devices.

It was a giant mass that could break this defense.

Layfon took up a stance to endure through this attack, releasing his Kei.

The steel threads formed a huge spiderweb above the abandoned city, giving off blue light from bearing Layfon's Kei. The giant spear flew through the sky as if to rip the spiderweb apart, and though the steel threads bent severely, they still held it there.

"Ugh....."

Layfon mumbled while releasing his Kei. The strength of the steel threads was related to Layfon's strength. He definitely couldn't show weakness in front of this phalanx. More importantly , he definitely couldn't allow this foothold to be destroyed. If it were only Layfon it wouldn't matter, but if he had to carry Felli and fight with the giants, he needed a safe area.

"Huah!"

Layfon's shout resounded through the abandoned city. The light of Kei decorated the spiderweb, and the Kei pressure extended its fangs to the giants below him.

Of course, there was still the giant spear.

The spiderweb that was being pushed by the spear bent into a conical shape. The giant spear became the axis of the cone.

At that time, Kei began to gather. The gigantic Kei that Layfon released focused on that space, and Kei pressure covered the entire spear.

The spear was crushed in an instant, and the strength of the explosion produced was directed below the cone, into the giants.

The substance that formed the giant spear became a shotgun, spreading out along with the force of the Kei flow.

The continuous explosion engulfed the giants, making them collapse one by one.

"Yes!"

His counterattack had succeeded, and Layfon once again ran on the steel threads.

Perhaps warned by the counterattack just now, the spears that the giants released even now didn't form giant spears.

"Felli..... how's the situation?"

"Please wait a bit, it's almost there....."

Felli's reply wasn't the same as Layfon had expected. It wasn't despair, but more like hope. Layfon didn't have time to think about asking, as he ran quickly, swept away the spears, while controlling the steel threads to secure footholds.

"....I have carried out an investigation into the substance of this city, and have indeed detected this monster's existence."

While he ran, his ears picked up Felli's murmur to herself:

"Ninety-nine percent of the substance that comprises this city has been replaced by those things. In other words, it wouldn't be too much to say that this city itself has already become a monster."

"....."

The belly of the beast..... Layfon had once thought this way, but he never had imagined that it was the truth. Layfon was speechless .

But, he didn't give up.

Because she murmured like that.

Because she hadn't mentioned a negative outcome.

Felli had definitely murmured that in order to perform some countermeasure.

"On a different note, the small quantity that remains, although even today it still doesn't look favorably upon our outstretched claws, is probably worth some investigation."

"Where is it?"

"The central district, underground."

"Alright!"

"Layfon.....!"

The moment he heard this, Layfon threw Felli high into the sky, her surprised scream ascending into the air along with her. Layfon used this opportunity to turn his gaze downward.

"......Don't think that I can only run away."

Layfon spread the steel threads, thereby ensuring a safe place, setting up a formation over the whole city district.

All that was left was to flow Kei into it.

Layfon grasped the Dite tightly, streaming Kei in without hesitation.

Sougenkyouku - Amanosouchishu.

This was a trap that Layfon had woven while running to and fro in the air.

Where was the trap hidden?

The center of the spiderweb.

Balls of thread that emerged from that place broke off from the spiderweb and fell to the ground.

Though they were light-looking balls of thread, they weren't pushed around by the wind of the battlefield, rather lightly falling down to the central district from above the city.

After they fell, the tightly knotted balls separated.

They separated, and opened.

Something like an explosion burst out from there in all directions, great quantities of steel threads. After they opened, the balls of thread scattered steel threads like an explosion, knocking down the giants one by one.

When the same giants had brutally ravaged Zuellni, Lintence who had appeared in Zuellni had used Kei techniques to defeat those monsters, and that Kei move had been the same Amanosouchishu as now.

Incidentally, the same scene from back then replayed again here .

The giants were swept away one after another.

The giants were cut apart into pieces, blown away by the Kei pressure, burned by the heat flow.

Layfon's enormous Kei gradually played out a scene different from back them.

He cut down and burned the enemies.

"Ah!"

Layfon caught the falling Felli.

Bam!

"Guah!"

The blow that suddenly struck his forehead almost made Layfon slip from his steel thread foothold.

"What are you doing so suddenly?"

"S.....sorry."

"Next time please tell me first."

"I'll take care."

It would be alright as long as he said something..... Layfon thought this while he looked below his feet. Amanosouchishu was still running even now, destroying giants one after another.

So, an empty area appeared in this central district.

"Let's go."

"Yes."

Once again carrying Felli, Layfon jumped down into the central district.

Perhaps she would be forced to make a decision.

Vati sat alone in the boring room, thinking.

What she thought about was 'Vati B' of the abandoned city.

"It was within expectations that it could think and judge independently. But 'Vati B's target settings have become a state ahead of even my settings at the time. This makes me concerned."

Other than her, there was no one here. However, Vati still continued speaking to herself:

"It's possible that it has to do with data suffering damage during the destruction. If the repairs of back then allowed the target settings to change, then 'Vati B's current actions wouldn't be very strange, right?"

In conclusion, things had become very troublesome.

"I have to stop it, but....."

Vati had her ways. She could quickly travel to that location and suppress it. After that, both merging with 'Vati B' or completely scrapping it would be sufficient.

Regardless of the plan, if she just left it without doing anything, it would definitely make the situation worse. If Layfon and Felli who were there successfully overcame the crisis, and 'Vati B' exposed its core.....

"Stopping it from updating its external data doesn't work? But... ..."

Perhaps, Vati's true form would be seen.

"I don't want a commotion to break out in this place....."

He was already no longer useful. Not letting him live to return would work, but.....

"That would resolve everything, that kind of method is rather ideal."

Perhaps she had been forced to decide, Vati once again thought.

In the end, hadn't she already noticed long ago? That way of thinking had appeared in Vati when she watched Meishen.

"Lost things will not return, only the attachment will linger."

Lævateinn was born by that kind of attachment, and then.....

"Attachment is something that needs to disappear, but something that cannot be transcended."

That man had been possessed by an attachment that he couldn't transcend and couldn't escape. Lævateinn was only the solace he had constructed.

The Nano-Celluloid Interface by the name of Lævateinn couldn't even act as solace anymore.

"Therefore, should I become a machine acting on my own after this?"

She threw the question at herself.

However, she who should have responded to the question didn't have an answer.

Vati kept her silence.

She couldn't act until she found an answer.

Layfon fell to the central district.

"Then, where is it?"

The giants hadn't left remains. After they were cut and burned, the giants had disappeared as if melting.

If he hadn't destroyed the enemies, perhaps they would attack again. Even if he were falling to the ground, Layfon still confirmed the surrounding situation as he carried Felli.

The central district was surprisingly tidy. Perhaps it was because the giants had been born from the wreckage, but this place hadn't become a structure filled with holes, but rather a flat space.

"It's under the ground here?"

"Nn."

After hearing Felli's answer, Layfon let the steel threads move ahead of him and form a new defensive formation as he walked downwards.

The reinforcements here were arranged in scaffolds like a half-constructed structure, and Layfon and Felli descended through this space. Although giants were everywhere, because of the effects of Sougenkyouku just now, there were no giants at a distance where they could quickly attack. However, the long-distance spear attacks still continued.

The defensive steel thread formation moving ahead of them stopped those attacks while scattering off sparks. Layfon watched while landing on some steel en route.

"Where is it?'

"Please wait..... Huh? What is this?"

"Felli?"

"It's moving?"

"Huh?"

"There are changes below.....? Run!"

Layfon didn't ask about it, simply leaping up.

The steel threads only observed the abnormality after he leapt. There was wind roiling far downwards. The blowing wind felt as if it carried sand with it, because in the air was mixed the substance that composed the giants.

The area with wind wasn't the entire space below, but rather only under Layfon and Felli's feet. A bad premonition shook Layfon.

Boom.

The swirling wind that had formed under them increased, seeming as if the wind had a life of its own. More importantly, it seemed as if there was something strong pushing the wind upwards.

These two feelings were reality.

There was something there.

There was nothing in front of their eyes. However, the information that the steel threads transmitted and Layfon's body's experience from fighting with countless filth monsters both conveyed this reality.

The moment when he actually saw the truth, Layfon could only feel embarrassed.

"Wha-!"

Up until just now, that thing had definitely not been there.

A wall had suddenly appeared, or was it a floor?

A solid white suddenly appeared, rushing upwards.

"Ugh!"

The wind was pushed up by the large floor that rushed upwards, becoming a tempest raging in all directions. Layfon's body was pushed back by the wind, and he was sent flying along with Felli.

He had been blown away like this..... He couldn't let things become like this. Their voices were drowned out by the wind, and Layfon scattered steel threads to hold himself and Felli down.

The raging wind mercilessly wrapped up the giants, sending them flying.

Something possessing this kind of power appeared before their eyes, rushing upwards.

"What is that?"

"A tower?"

Layfon felt very surprised, and in his arms, Felli's voice sounded against his protective suit.

"A tower?"

The wind almost drowned out Layfon's question.

"Yes, I think it's a tower, or a tall building similar to a tower. There's no meaning in constructing such a giant thing only to kill us."

"......That's true."

But, a building?

For what?

"In the end, our target has moved inside this tower."

"Huh?"

"What is it?"

"Uh, that shows that thing is..... also very important to the enemies?"

"......I fear that's correct. What is it? Did you only notice that now?"

"Only now....."

"The opponent should be able to use their substance to cover one hundred percent of this city. That they had not done so either means that they can't, or they want to maintain the original condition without changing, these two possibilities."

"Um....."

"......No, whatever. Being surprised by this kind of thing, I was too stupid."

"Uuu."

"Nn, outside of Military Arts, expecting anything out of Layfon is pretty much wrong, isn't it?"

"P.....Please stop there, forgive me."

While the two of them spoke, the tower continued extending, covering Layfon's vision with white. It smashed the reinforcements around them, absorbing their substance and making them become a part of itself as it extended upwards.

The tower was already tall enough to where the location of the peak couldn't be confirmed from Layfon's position. If viewed from above, it would probably be vast enough to amaze people.

"How tall."

"The top has already passed the air filter."

"Felli, wear your helmet."

After saying this, Layfon also put on his helmet.

"Huu!"

Layfon exhaled inside the helmet, wiping away the surprise that still remained in his heart. Felli's anger made Layfon, who had almost been engulfed by the enemy due to his careless momentum, stand up again.

"It's like this every time."

"......What?"

"Nothing!"

Felli always helped him.

She always stayed by him, as a Psychokinesist, a companion, and a friend.

Her existence let him relax a great deal, and Layfon's body as he read the winds while jumping was also lightened.

The footholds that he had released before had also been ruined by the tower. However, there were still steel threads remaining. Layfon used those steel threads in his jump, constructing new footholds to form a path with the top of the tower as its target.

Layfon ran.

The path to the top was very long. However, the giants under his feet didn't stop Layfon anymore.

Therefore, all that was left was a long road.

This didn't count as an obstacle in front of the speed of a Military Artist.

Not long after, Layfon had reached the top of the tower.

The tower that continued stretching upwards was quite unstable, and Layfon lowered his posture.

"Felli, where's the correct location?'

"Please wait a bit more. Though I want to find it, there are other responses....."

"Huh?"

In this situation where so many changes were happening, Felli had deliberately brought this up. Layfon couldn't overlook those words.

"A powerful energy is emerging from the building..... This, quickly move back!"

Felli shouted out, and Layfon moved according to her instructions. Without taking any precautions at all, Layfon jumped back from the tower that he had only climbed up with difficulty.

After jumping off the tower, Layfon began thinking of how to return to it. His current position was already higher than even the legs surrounding the city, so shooting the steel threads there was meaningless.

He could only catch hold of the tower. But.....

Layfon hesitated. The phrase 'powerful energy' created that kind of response in him.

And that decision was correct.

Crash!

"Ugh!"

Intense light blocked his vision, and at the same time a shock assaulted his right hand, knocking the Dite out of his hand.

"Damn....."

"A powerful energy was discharged from above the tower, it's still in a charged state right now."

Felli, who replaced his vision, explained the situation to Layfon.

"Charged....."

Was that the shock that had passed through his right hand and even now left a paralyzed feeling in his hand? With that, then even if he had the steel threads in his hand, he couldn't wrap them around the tower. Layfon thought while taking out the Adamantium Dite to replace the Sapphire Dite that had fallen, restoring it again to the steel threads mode.

"And that discharge means..... Where was it directed?"

It wasn't an attack aimed at himself and Felli. Compared to the tall tower, Layfon and Felli were far too tiny, and a method of attack like the entire tower shooting off a giant energy couldn't have been directed at the two of them.

"Ah, even if that heat wasn't directed, but simply spread around , it seems enough to eliminate us a thousand times."

"....I'm a bit scared, please don't say any more."

Layfon used steel threads from the ground to create a landing area, and they landed on the city's leg.

"Even I have never deployed my Psychokinesis flakes in an area that high, so I'm currently investigating what things are over there. ....."

Felli's words were drowned out mid-sentence.

A flash once again cut off normal vision, followed by the sound of an explosion.

The noise of the explosion shook their skulls.

"What is it this time?"

Layfon's voice had become loud, was this because of his ears, or because he was nervous?

Changes that had nothing to do with Layfon were happening.

The true face of the flash was titanic lightning. A blast of lightning large enough to engulf the top of the tower had set off that explosion.

The pieces flying high overhead fell to the ground, and in this situation, light was again released. Was this shot out by the tower, or was it a beam of light dropping from the sky? Was it descending or ascending? The continuing light didn't let Layfon make a judgment.

"What's happened?"

"High energies are trading blows. Though there is something in the sky, the other party is using this heatstorm to make it difficult for me to manipulate the flakes. Though I managed to use Psychokinesis to carry out an investigation from a distance, still..... "

Only speaking part of her sentence, Felli once again stopped speaking. Moreover, Layfon observed that she had obtained significant information.

"How is it?"

"I've already figured it out. This is..... Harpe."

"Harpe?"

Layfon still remembered. This was the sentient aged phase that they had seen before when Zuellni lost control. Cloud-cell Separation Interface IV Harpe.

That should be its name.

"Why?"

"I don't know, perhaps because the two are enemies?"

In the end, this battle for which they couldn't open their eyes was a war between monsters, the parasitic monster using this city and the monster Harpe.

Even if they closed their eyes, the beams of light still keenly passed through their eyelids to prick their eyes. In order to search for a safe place that the beams of light couldn't reach, Layfon relied on the feelings conveyed by the steel threads scattered everywhere to move downwards to the ground.

There were giants all around. But perhaps they had Harpe as their first priority, as the giants didn't even see Layfon, becoming materials to repair the tower one after another, decomposing and merging with the tower.

In the end, Layfon was grateful for this situation. He focused his mind, treating his eyes that were continuously hurt by the beams of light.

"How are things now?"

Layfon flowed Kei into his tightly closed eyes while asking this.

"I believe it should be even. Destroying and being destroyed, and then repairing. A winner won't be decided so quickly."

The sounds of explosions also reached this place, and the noise made the reinforcements that Layfon was leaning on vibrate.

"What do we do?"

"We can't do anything."

Felli's voice was very cold. She had roiled to such a degree in order to come here, so why would this kind of thing happen..... Perhaps she was thinking that way.

Layfon also wanted to think this way.

"Our decision to come here wasn't wrong, isn't that right?"

But, Layfon decided to deliberately think of the benefits.

Felli's eyes on the other side of her helmet seemed to have opened wide.

"......That's true, you could think that way."

"In the end, we first have to treat your eyes, then think of a way to deal with that blinding light....."

"For that, I have a good method, though it's only a quick fix."

"Really?"

"Nn, it won't use too much time either."

"Then I'm counting on you."

"Well, please take off your helmet. I've already confirmed the safety of the air."

After Felli said this, Layfon took off his helmet, and then a number of Psychokinesis flakes entered it.

"To explain it simply, it's like expanding the visual aid screen to the entire helmet. Though you can't use your eyes to look at the battle, this method should be able to reduce the intensity of the light."

"Is there anything like a time lag?"

"Of course, you can only go get used to it."

"Understood."

Regardless, it was better than not being able to see.

The helmet was handled in an instant. After putting it back on his head, what he saw from the inside was a much brighter scene than before.

Layfon scattered the steel threads, confirming the feeling that he had received from that place, and finding out how much time lag there was with the vision through the screen.

At the same time, he used the steel threads to find the Sapphire Dite that he had just lost, reclaiming it.

"How is it?"

"......No problems. It the disparity is only this much, I can handle it."

"Really? You will get killed with only a bit of carelessness, so I'll quickly improve anywhere I can, but....."

"It's not important. ....."

"What?"

"No, Felli has truly helped me a lot."

"In this kind of situation, please don't say those kind of emotional things."

Because of Felli's helmet, he currently was unable to see her expression through the faceguard.

"But, it's really the case."

"Layfon is quite weird."

"Maybe. I think there are already no safe places here, so shall we go die like this?"

"Nn, I don't mind."

"Then....."

Layfon leaped up high.

Light and explosions interlocked with each other, shaking Layfon's body as he leaped. Even so, the light on the screen still maintained the strength of strong summer sunlight. Though beams of light slightly changed its strength, his eyes weren't hurt.

Layfon continuously leaped, and Felli leaned in his arms without moving a muscle. Layfon used his eyes to confirm his destination.

Far above the tall tower, in an even higher space, a being that looked to be a small black dot was Harpe.

"Our target hasn't changed its position, right?"

"It hasn't changed. The target we want to find is in the central area three hundred mels under the top of the tower."

"......I got it."

What should he do? Layfon ran while thinking of this question. Near the top of the tower was a tempest of high energy, and protective suits shouldn't be able to support it, nor could the flesh of a Military Artist endure it.

Layfon didn't have reasons to fight, his target wasn't Harpe or the monster of this tower, but rather Delbone's records hidden in this city.

"Felli, please wait a bit."

"Huh? Ah, okay."

From Felli's answer, did she understand Layfon's intent?

This time Layfon threw her backwards.

Layfon's petite body gradually became a black dot in the vast sky. Layfon couldn't have any time to watch it till the end, charging at the tower wall.

(I'll display the position of the target on the screen.)

Felli's voice sounded in the helmet.

The tower wall spread in front his eyes became half-transparent, and the target object was displayed in as a spherical mesh on the screen.

(That tall tower is hollow; the outer wall thickness is four Mels.)

"Understood!"

Layfon yelled out as his reply, and he restored the Sapphire Dite to steel threads, restoring the replaced Adamantium Dite to a blade.

Layfon used the steel threads deployed everywhere, shooting himself out like an arrow from a bow, and then took up the stance to draw a sword.

External Kei variant - Sendan.

The light of the sword flashed out after using Composite Blast, penetrating into the tower. Felli's screen even blocked the flash of the Kei technique, and he could clearly see Sendan cutting into the outer wall of the tower, letting it break into pieces.

Layfon passed through the pieces scattering all round him, jumping inside.

(The interior doesn't have any traces of being worked on, but this tower could have been formed by that tiny substance, please be careful.)

"Alright."

As Layfon replied with this, he leaped into the air, half-gliding through it.

He passed through the hole that Sendan had broken, entering the central area.

Just as Felli had said, the interior was quite empty, and other than the external walls and large pillars running up and down, there was nothing here.

The tower walls blocked out the noise from the outside world. Noise poured in from the hole that Layfon had opened, but was swallowed by the darkness extending upwards and downwards, and the cold air tightly wreathed his whole body.

According to the picture displayed on the screen, the target object was buried inside the central shaft. Layfon who was still gliding through the air swung the Adamantium Dite, carefully cutting into the shaft. Sparks were sent flying from the Kei-infused blade cutting the shaft. Afterwards, the target object appeared.

Inside the shaft was a tiny opening, and inside was placed a spherical object.

(That's it!)

"Good."

Felli's voice was mixed with excitement. After stabilizing himself by wrapping himself to the shaft with the steel threads, Layfon extended his hands to the sphere.

"!"

The ice-cold air that passed through his protective gear made Layfon open his eyes wide.

There was a white hand placed on top of his arm that was preparing to pick up the sphere.

"Wha-!"

That hand had grown out of the pillar.

That was a extremely normal hand, perhaps the hand of a girl.

(Layfon!)

"I know!"

Right now there was no time to be surprised. Felli was currently in the air, still falling.

Layfon didn't have time to check what the arm even was, and he grabbed the sphere, releasing the stabilizing steel threads as if he wanted to shake off the hand, jumping backwards.

Layfon had a feeling as if a cold air that made his spine tingle seemed to linger around his arm.

The hole that Layfon had passed through had already begun to be covered. He released Sendan to maintain the hole, squeezing out.

"Felli!"

Layfon had sent the steel threads over first, but this was only a configuration to stop the giants from nearing Felli. If he stopped her and the giants turned towards her, then the situation might become hard to deal with. It was only because it was safer to let Felli continue to fall freely that he did this. Of course, this way would significantly reduce the shortcomings if there was going to be a battle.

(I'm here.)

The screen showed Felli's current position.

(Because of the effects of the wind, my falling path has become hard to predict.)

"Okay!"

After exiting the interior of the tower, the sound of the explosions and flashes swirled around him like a tempest. However, the loud noises blew away the strange feeling from just now, and increased Layfon's focus.

Layfon kicked off the steel threads spread around the surroundings while tracking his falling path and chasing towards Felli.

Layfon quickly saw her figure. She had curled her body into a ball, and her appearance of enduring the speed of the fall made Layfon's heart ache, and the power with which he kicked off the steel threads also unconsciously strengthened.

The arm that wasn't holding the sphere extended towards Felli.

Felli, who noticed that Layfon appeared, pushed out through the wind pressure towards his extended hand.

"Felli!"

(Layfon.)

He caught her.

Layfon could only use one hand, so he hurriedly pulled Felli towards himself.

Layfon pulled Felli upwards, correcting their positions, and adjusted his position downwards to a position where he could catch her.

"I caught up."

"That's good."

A relaxed atmosphere was mixed in with Felli's voice, and he didn't seem mistaken about it.

"It's this, right?"

"Nn, that should be it."

"Then, next we only need to escape this place....."

After saying this, Layfon began thinking about how to escape.

Feeling a sense of accomplishment and safety, along with satisfaction, Layfon's many emotions made him momentarily forget what had happened. Perhaps the event just now had been far too abnormal to explain, and Layfon had wanted to forget it.

Perhaps it was because he was too queasy that Layfon wanted to act as if nothing had happened.

Regardless of the reason, he was concerned.

Because even if he pretended as if he hadn't seen anything, ‘it’ was still watching.

That thing suddenly appeared, and Layfon's reflexes were too slow to react, and the two of them simply stood completely still.

"Wha-?"

"Huh?"

Layfon shouted, as if cursing his carelessness, and his ears heard the confused voice that Felli made.

An arm had appeared from the sphere that Layfon carried, that white arm that had just planned on grabbing Layfon.

It was a slim female arm.

Two arms extended from the sphere that Layfon held in his hands, even grabbing Layfon's shoulders. The cold feeling that passed through the protective clothing and made his hair stand on end was the same as before.

The two could make no responses other than the sounds of surprise. At that time, the changes continued as if to keep the two of them from catching their breath.

Half of a body appeared from the arms.

From the interior of the sphere.

Perhaps it hadn't grown from the sphere, but only looked as if it had grown out of it. Actually, it was only constructed from the tiny substance that Felli had mentioned.

Layfon's Military Artist eyes could only see with great difficulty the speed at which it was taking shape.

But Layfon who was nearly surprised to death could only stare at the slightly older female who had appeared from the small sphere that he held.

As if water coming out of the sphere, the top of her head first appeared, followed by her hair, followed by her forehead..... and then her face was shown.

"......Huh?"

Then, Layfon was surprised again.

The female who was currently appearing as if climbing out of a lake wore clothes simpler than the protective clothing that Layfon and Felli wore. She was an attractive girl whose thoughts couldn't be seen through.

She was a girl that he had once seen.

Layfon hadn't seen her dressed up in this manner, but she had seen someone who looked exactly the same.

The feeling as if he had seen the girl before him in a picture before made Layfon's memories hurt.

The answer had already appeared.

However, the person that Layfon thought he knew had never existed.

"Vati?"

Yes, this girl looked extremely similar to Vati. She made Layfon unable to keep from feeling that Vati would become like that in a few years.

"If you come from the Academy City Zuellni, then that person called Vati is my original body."

The girl in front of them spoke smoothly.

The shock made his body tremble.

However, he couldn't stay surprised in this current situation.

Because Layfon and the others were still falling.

"Ugh!"

Layfon got a hold of himself, beginning to manipulate the steel threads. Layfon held Felli with one hand, holding the sphere with the other, and had his shoulders grasped by the female who looked like Vati, so his current self could do nothing other than using the steel threads.

Layfon and Felli's freefall had already ended. They stopped moving, beginning to ascend. Layfon used the steel threads that were strung everywhere, first moving them to the city's legs.

Actually, Layfon should have sent an attack towards the 'thing' in front of him that looked very much like Vati.

However, he couldn't. Though this was also because that 'thing' hadn't meant any harm to them yet, the more important reason was because it was too similar to Vati and sent Layfon's mind into disarray, making him hesitate.

However, he also couldn't stay in a stupor forever.

Judging from its current appearance, it couldn't be a normal person. It could be just a coincidence that it looked similar to Vati,

and perhaps the words it had just spoken were lies constructed from what Layfon himself had said.

First, he had to separate himself from it.

Layfon thought this. In order to accomplish this, he moved the steel threads.

"....."

The contact with his shoulders disappeared. The 'thing' in front of him left Layfon.

Vati's appearance flew into the sky even higher than Layfon. Her movement as if being carried by the wind almost fascinated Layfon, but he quickly reclaimed his focus.

His movements had been seen through, that was what had just happened.

After landing on the city legs, Layfon quickly set down Felli, putting her and the sphere behind his back. The 'thing' had appeared from the sphere, and frankly Layfon also wanted to first maintain his distance from the sphere, but that object was their goal after all, so he couldn't do that.

That was because Layfon was feeling a danger that made his head throb, but was this created because of the 'thing' in front of him, or because of the sphere behind him?

"What..... are you?"

The battle between Harpe and the tall tower still continued, and similarly, the flashes and explosions had not stopped. Layfon's voice was drowned out by this noise.

However, the 'thing' had heard his voice.

"I am the copy of Nano-Celluloid Interface 1 Lævateinn that was sent to this world to carry out reconnaissance, and my serial number is X C one zero seven eight five three four five six seven....."

She spoke a long string of digits. The 'thing' could say this long string of digits with such a fast speed, so it clearly wasn't a human. No, the answer was already very clear, but Layfon just didn't want to believe it.

Was it because it was very similar to Vati?

Was it because it looked very similar to a neighbor of his apartment building?

"Just now, my original body gave me the temporary name of ' Vati B'."

"'Vati B'....."

"Layfon....."

"....Nn."

"If it's the same as the monsters here, then doubting Vati just because she looks the same is far too weak as evidence."

"......That's true."

Even Felli who said this was the same, though she thought her words were very reasonable, she also showed an expression saying that she couldn't completely believe her conclusion.

Why had the monster purposefully showed Vati's appearance? More importantly, why wasn't it exactly the same as Vati, but rather slightly different from her? These doubts formed unnatural feelings, sticking tightly to the hearts of the two.

Layfon looked at 'Vati B'. It seemed just like Vati after growing up, and if someone said she was Vati's sister, perhaps he could understand.

However, that couldn't be the case.

The blood relationship that Layfon thought about couldn't exist.

He only had to think about how 'Vati B' had appeared from before, and what it had just said, and the answer was very obvious .

"......Why have you come here?"

The one who said this was Felli.

She stood behind Layfon who couldn't move at all, asking a question of 'Vati B'.

"You said 'this world' just now, that means that you were born in a different place from the one we know and exist in a different space. What have you come to this place for?"

"......For liberation."

"Liberation?"

"Our master is currently in an incarcerated state, and destroying this world is a requirement to liberate him."

"What does that mean?"

Destroying this world was a requirement for liberation?

It was obviously impossible to understand if the other party suddenly said something like this.

"This is..... Kah, kschah....."

'Vati B' suddenly made abnormal movements.

"What?"

"Get back!"

As if her machinery had faulted, 'Vati B' made abnormal motions, and Layfon guarded Felli while pulling back the distance.

"Kshhh..... Lævateinn....."

'Vati B' murmured several words, then suddenly cracked apart.

"Wha-!"

It was truly sudden. 'Vati B' disintegrated like a mountain of sand, the residue being carried away by the wind, disappearing without even a trace.

"Damn!"

Though Layfon didn't understand, that kind of thing had just happened. He didn't know what it was that made him feel remorse .

"Never mind that for now, right now we have to analyze that thing."

"Then when will we leave?"

"I'll finish analyzing during the period of time when we're getting the motorcycle back."

"......Alright."

Flashes and explosions continued. Layfon looked at the battle being carried out on the top of the tower.

Those monsters should be related to Leerin and Nina.

"Can I only run away again?"

This made Layfon feel regretful, and he tightly clenched his teeth.

There was no reason to disclose superfluous information. Vati decided to stop 'Vati B's function.

She gathered Nano-Celluloids in the surroundings of the abandoned city, letting them specialize in a function sufficient to achieve the goal.

During this process, she hadn't slackened in her information gathering.

"How should I tidy this up?"

Vati mumbled to herself in her room.

It was Harpe.

Once the same kind of Nano-Celluloid, but who had raised the flag of rebellion towards their master Ignasis, it was a being who was Vati - Lævateinn's sibling, or perhaps child. That was Harpe.

Perhaps, it currently was an enemy who had improved itself from a Nano-Celluloid Interface into a Cloud-Cell Separation Interface.

"Or, is Harpe the true child of Soho?"

The father who had created Lævateinn and the Nano-Celluloids , and at the same time the sacrifice of Ignasis, he was called Soho.

Vati felt that she seemed to already be able to understand what humans called 'irony'. However, the probability of her correctly using that kind of technique was very low. The current her could only speak the solemn truth. Soho had created Lævateinn for his own reasons, but his reasons didn't become reality. Lævateinn had lived in order to realize his goals, even as a test, and had used the death of the one who brought about Soho's desire.

By now, Lævateinn still carried out her plans for that conclusion that no one expected anymore. Though she was well aware, she didn't stop.

If the solemn truth wasn't irony, then 'humans who weren't able to follow an established schedule', or perhaps 'an existence whose life was predetermined from birth to death' was irony.

Then, what were humans after all?

"There's no meaning at all."

Noticing that her thoughts had begun turning towards philosophy, Vati stopped thinking.

There were currently two things to resolve. She had to punish the copy 'Vati B' who couldn't stop from losing control, along with Harpe who had begun taking action again.

Since she had given up on reclaiming the knowledge that 'Vati B' possessed, then there was a method that could resolve both problems.

Destruction.

However, to destroy them wasn't simple.

The two were the same as Lævateinn, made up of Nano-Celluloids, so to annihilate them wasn't easy. It was only because of this that a victor still hadn't been decided between Lævateinn and Harpe up through now.

If she did, then she would have to carry out large-scale destruction.

Vati prepared for this. Fortunately, Harpe and 'Vati B' were fighting each other, and it seemed that they hadn't noticed the concealed movements that she was taking.

If this went on, her battle plans should succeed.

However.....

"With this, those two will also....."

Vati thought. To her, those two..... Layfon had already lost his use. The object of Vati's observations was Meishen, and Meishen's goal was Layfon, that was the whole of it. If that had already become the past, then whether he lived or died was a trivial insignificance. It didn't need to be said that Felli who was with him was obviously the same.

But..... Vati couldn't make a decision towards the two of them. The obscure elements that always made Vati hesitate in her decision still existed inside her.

"This isn't reasonable."

The unknown elements that had occurred in her own body didn't allow Vati to make a decision, and she tilted her head.

Had all students become designated as a second-class protected object while she was hiding in the Academy City, creating this obstacle to her judgment?

Vati wanted to express her companionship even though she was a machine, but if those settings would become an obstacle like the current one, she had to get rid of them.

However, it was necessary to get rid of them step-by-step.

Those were the settings that allowed the Nano-Celluloid Interface 1 Lævateinn to live under the identity of the student Vati

Len. The experiences she had obtained with these settings were quite precious information to Lævateinn who pursued the answer to the question 'what are humans'.

The settings of companionship and the designation of protected objects were among these, and in the process of accumulating her experiences and modifying her principles, some people had been deleted from the protected objects, and some people had been elevated to a higher ranking.

In these people, the highest was Meishen, and then was Layfon and Meishen's good friends. As long as they didn't reveal her secrets, even Nina and Claribel who knew Vati's secrets had been designated as protected.

Removing Layfon who had a high ranking from the list of protected objects would create severe changes in her settings, so Vati couldn't immediately make that judgment.

Perhaps she should simply give up the settings of the student Vati Len?

If she did this, she could immediately take action.

But, that would mean that the experimentation Vati was carrying out in this Academy City would end, and represented that she would again start her final battle plans under the identity Lævateinn.

"....."

Vati didn't know what to say.

Knock knock.....

A bit later, doorknocks sounded in the room.

"Vati? Are you here?"

"Yes."

The muffled voice that came from behind the door was Meishen's voice.

"What's the matter?"

Before opening the door, Vati already knew what Meishen had in her hands. However, she still asked while pretending not to know.

Meishen carried a big bowl, and the top was covered with a gray cloth.

"I made a little too much, so I brought some to share with you."

"Thank you, is this alright?"

Vati had long since known that Meishen was lying, but she still continued observing.

Meishen thought that the reason Vati didn't look too well was because her body was uncomfortable, so she had prepared dinner to bring here.

"It's no problem."

Meishen only said this, and Vati who had no way to refuse her took the bowl.

"Then I'll be going."

"Okay, good night."

After watching her go with a smile, Vati closed the door. From that day, her smile had changed. Though it was a small change in the way her muscles moved, it was enough of a change to be sure that something had happened on that day.

Seeing that smile, Vati stopped thinking.

The situation in the abandoned city still continued, and right now it wasn't the time to postpone a decision.

Even so, Vati still stopped.

"Time..... can really fly..... I have to limit the time set."

It wasn't easy for her to mumble these words.

If she didn't remove or change the settings of the student Vati Len, but moreover had to resolve the current situation, then she could only do this.

After seeing Meishen's smile, Vati made her decision.

Flashes and explosions still interlaced with each other. From Layfon and Felli's point of view, they could only use such a manner to describe the battle, as the two weapons carried out this sort of battle without tiring.

The two of them repeated destruction and being destroyed, and then repaired themselves at the same time. The Aurora particles that formed the filth monsters were the common factor of the two worlds, and the Celluloids that formed these weapons used that substance as an energy source for proliferation. Because of this, they could proliferate almost limitlessly.

Of course, the functions that controlled the Celluloids has some limits, so they couldn't multiply recklessly. But in the current situation, they didn't hold back their production.

Thinking for themselves with unlimited energy, taking action by themselves, producing by themselves, improving themselves, repairing themselves.....

If the two weapons that possessed the same functions faced each other, it would play out as this kind of long war of attrition.

Judging from the battle experience of Harpe, there was no way to single out a winner.

Still, both sides didn't plan on stopping the situation.

This was a battle after a very long rest, and Harpe wasn't confused. The meaning for its existence was to fight with the enemies of humans, and to Harpe, the enemy of humans was Ignasis and the Nano-Celluloids that he had created.

When he fought with them, Harpe didn't have the option of retreating. Also, it wasn't as if he hadn't used any tactics.

Even so, it still hadn't resolved the problem of the battle entering a long stalemate. Perhaps, regardless of whether it was Harpe or a Nano-Celluloid, it wouldn't matter much to them. Because they only recognized the existence of life on a literal level, and they could live very long.

So the battle had returned to a meaningless destruction and rebirth, as if endlessly sinking into quicksand.

If there weren't any other variables to disrupt it.....

Layfon soon found the motorcycle that they had lost sight of.

Felli was analyzing the sphere they had obtained. Because the incident involving 'Vati B' had just happened, Layfon was very alert towards that sphere, afraid that it might be a trap of the enemy, but it seemed that things weren't that way.

"....."

Layfon minded Felli who was focusing her mind while using the steel threads to move the motorcycle outside the city. In order to be careful, he put a defensive formation around the motorcycle, and made preparations for escaping.

Felli still didn't have any responses.

Felli had said that she would completely analyze the sphere before Layfon finished his preparations, but it seemed the situation was unexpectedly troublesome.

Layfon didn't want to blame her, nor did he want to remind her. Ensuring her safety was Layfon's current priority. After deciding this, Layfon once again deployed the steel threads.

The Sougenkyouku that Layfon had learned from Lintence, or perhaps stolen from him, wove the strongest defensive formation possible in these conditions.

Layfon wove while looking at the tall tower.

Flashes and explosions continued on. Felli was focused on analysis, so the scene on the screen seemed to have slightly changed. The image lost its sharpness slightly, and seemed a bit bright.

The battle was going on over there.

Could he only run away?

Could he only do this?

Layfon endlessly asked himself.

In the current scenario, picking a fight definitely wasn't the correct decision. They had already obtained their goal. Right now the most important thing was to return to Zuellni. With the information in the sphere, Layfon could advance to the next step.

Things should be that way.

However, at this stage, would he be in time by doing that?

Before his eyes such an intense battle was developing.

Hadn't this kind of battle happened before? Or perhaps this was the first time?

This kind of battle would lead to..... bigger things?

Thinking of this, Layfon unconsciously became restless.

".....Layfon?"

"Felli? What is it?"

"Nn, I obtained the information from the data. But....."

Layfon hadn't missed such a hesitating tone from Felli's voice.

Layfon deliberately didn't ask what information it was, because the hesitating tone mixed in her voice was definitely disappointment.

"Rather than calling it Delbone's memories, calling it the battle scenes that she gathered using Psychokinesis is more accurate."

Even so, Felli still began explaining:

"The weapon in female form just now was inside. There were also pictures of the giant monsters that attacked Zuellni before. Inside was also someone who might be Delbone, and judging by the changes in her appearance, it should probably be a picture from sixty or seventy years ago."

"....."

"It's a very valuable image. I'm also very concerned about the true identity of the female just now..... and the relations between them."

The relationship between her and Vati. Though the monster just now had taken the form of Vati, the picture could confirm that it wasn't to create confusion in Layfon and Felli.

This made suspicion fall on Vati, and Layfon began worrying about Meishen who so depended on her.

The two of them also noticed the dangerous shadow stretching towards Zuellni's fate.

Their gains were truly great.

They had to return to Zuellni immediately.

They needed to return, and confirm with their own eyes her agenda.

But..... was that it?

Would that be enough? This was a very important clue..... An important clue that would let Layfon and Felli follow to the next level.

That was true..... however.

It was because she understood this that Felli's voice was very low.

This would clearly be enough, but the two felt inexplicably unsatisfied.

The two both had this kind of feeling, and only this much couldn't satisfy Layfon and Felli.

".....If we return now, we can relieve Zuellni's crisis."

"I know."

But, if Zuellni was truly in a crisis, then the situation should have happened a long time ago. She must have some sort of goal, so she hadn't destroyed Zuellni.

"......So Captain and the others are standing their ground?"

Actually, perhaps that was it.

"She hasn't done anything at all up to now, so perhaps there's no reason to hurry back. ......But this is a big assumption."

Every sentence being an assumption made Felli feel disgust at herself.

It wasn't like that.

There was no such thing.

Layfon wanted those possibilities. The possibility of moving forwards, the possibility of seeing the future. With that, he would be able to continue moving. Even if he had to be reckless, Layfon still wanted to know where he was going.

He wanted to have the guarantee in his hands that no matter what happened, he would be fine.

"But, there's no such thing in the world."

Humans couldn't succeed every time. If he could have done that , Layfon wouldn't have come to Zuellni.

He would have continued being a Heaven's Blade successor in Grendan, living a happy life with Leerin and the others, and wouldn't have met Felli and Nina.

However, Layfon had actually been forced to Zuellni, and was struggling in this place to search for something.

There was only one thing, the fact that Layfon was an excellent Military Artist should be the only thing Layfon could take pride in, but even that had been caught up to by Nina and others, and even Leerin had refused to rely on him. In front of all of this, Layfon began feeling that his Military Arts abilities didn't have much meaning.

"But....."

"You and I can only do this."

"Nn."

As a Military Artist, as a Psychokinesist..... how could they help others. To the two of them, these were the only abilities they could offer.

But, they could get nowhere relying only on these two abilities, that was reality.

There was a battle in front of them.

An incredible battle was happening that made one doubt whether it was real or not.

Moreover, this battle would definitely happen again on the road that Layfon and Felli were following. Just like the incredible battle that Delbone had experienced here and then crossed hands with again in Grendan where she had died. The battle that happened here would definitely play out again in Grendan.

And the next time, Nina and Leerin would definitely fight.

If they hadn't seen this battle, but had only obtained Delbone's records, perhaps they could still have returned.

"But, only having obtained this much, we can't go back. We can't return."

The two of them watched the extraordinary battle.

They already knew that these things were the enemies.

Therefore, there couldn't only be the option of retreat.

"If we run away and don't fight, won't everything be meaningless?"

"....."

"If we run away here, will we be able to fight next time?"

"....."

"Perhaps we can fight. But, maybe it's just my mood. But, but..... what we need isn't a fighting mood....."

"It's the reality of being able to fight."

Felli continued speaking.

"The reality of being able to fight, regardless of how strong the opponent or what kind of monster it is. We already have the determination. But, against an enemy that we can't simply rely on determination for, we need to confirm that we can fight until the end."

"That's what we need."

"Go then."

Felli pushed Layfon's back.

She had given him a push with her words.

"You think that there's a reason to do this. Then, there's a reason to do it. Regardless of what other people say, even if you realize it's a mistake afterwards, as long as you feel that there's a reason, your thought is the only truth at the time."

"Yes."

"Go prove that we're the strongest."

"Okay!"

Felli's words heated up his heart.

Layfon leaped without confusion.

He leaped towards the monster, leaped towards the tall tower.

In order to prove his strength, to prove his and Felli's strength.

Layfon leaped high, high up.

An unexpected situation had occurred.

"This will be annoying."

She tried to mix confusion in with her voice, but she didn't do very well.

However, that was enough. The problem was Layfon and Felli who were fighting in the abandoned city.

"I never would have thought that they wouldn't escape....."

She hadn't thought that they would make this kind of choice. According to her judgments, Layfon Alseif was an extremely careful person in battle.

Perhaps others knew him as someone who would throw himself into danger without blinking an eye, but he wouldn't

overestimate his fighting ability, and would calmly deal with things.

Therefore, they should have withdrawn from that sort of place.

In the end, they had already achieved their goal.

"Why is this?"

She obviously had heard what they had said.

For the determination they had made, their feelings, and the reality of being able to fight.

Proof of being the strongest.

"Meaning that they have to carry out real battle tests in order to fight with me..... Is that what it means?"

She should assume that 'Vati B' had come in contact with them, and that they had learned of Vati's true colors. Therefore, she had to plan things out before taking action.

Vati believed that she had to take action, but she had still decided to help them escape.

She had even fixed the malfunctioning areas of the motorcycle without being noticed, providing them with a perfectly safe method of escape.

But, they had made the choice to not escape, but rather fight.

That was troublesome.

"No....."

Was this troublesome? If they died in battle, then Vati wouldn't have to save them, and the people who knew the truth about her wouldn't continue to increase. To her, wasn't that a situation she wished for?

No.....

Things weren't like that.

"That's not right. There's already nothing here to see anymore, and I already know what I should know. I can only leave this place ."

Correct, she no longer had a reason to protect them. Even so, Vati still had made the decision to save them.

Why was that?

It was for her.

For Meishen Trinden.

She who had once been a target for observation had once loved Layfon Alseif, so Vati had made the decision to save him.

But..... However.....

Doing this was meaningless in the end.

The results that could be obtained from Meishen Trinden were essentially already in her hands.

She could even just make a conclusion, as she had already obtained the answer.

Meishen already held no value, and Vati had no reason to continue staying in this place.

Therefore, she didn't have any reason at all to destroy 'Vati B'. It should be enough as long as she returned to the original mission with it - to kill Grendan along with the creator and maintainer of this world, Saya, and to expel or defeat Airen who had imprisoned Ignasis in the moon.

That was Vati - Nano-Celluloid Interface 1 Lævateinn's fate.

So there was no reason to be worried. If Layfon and Felli wanted to fight, then let them fight.

"Like this, everything will end."

Yes, everything would end.

"....."

However, the answer still hadn't appeared.

Why?

"Why can't I decide?"

Vati endlessly ran her self-diagnosis function, but there were no abnormalities anywhere.

Then, was this condition of not being able to make a decision normal?

No.....

"The human mimicry program is outside of the self-diagnosis program. Is the problem really there?"

Her current highest priority task was to let the human mimicry program learn. According to her past judgment, perhaps the human mimicry program would be diagnosed as an abnormal condition. However, that kind of abnormality might become the possibility of becoming human, so Vati had excluded the program from her self-diagnostics.

In other words, the 'human' Vati Len that Lævateinn had cultivated till now, refused to watch Layfon die..... No, it refused to allow the possibility of Meishen Trinden feeling grief.

"....."

Because of that, she wasn't able to ignore them?

"Does the human mimicry program plan to take its own actions ?"

Looking at it this way, if it was an action taken by the human mimicry program that even her main self-diagnostic functions couldn't affect, that was definitely possible.

The will of the host was obviously the Nano-Celluloid Interface Lævateinn, however the human mimicry program was a material collection device she had created to understand humankind. Right before it had been assimilated by the host Lævateinn, it had been a will of its own. In other words, it was the same kind of being as the currently out-of-control 'Vati B'.

If it was the current the human mimicry program - the 'human' Vati Len - that was impeding her and made Lævateinn have difficulty making a decision, that meant that Vati was interfering with the host Lævateinn's operations, trying to protect Layfon and the others..... that was a way to think about it.

".....Then, what do you plan by doing this?"

Was the person speaking Vati or Lævateinn? Even she was almost unclear about the boundaries. More importantly, until now she had not even looked at Vati and Lævateinn as separate existences.

However, her hesitation had already disappeared. If she had a reason, she would create a copy like 'Vati B' - that was what a Nano-Celluloid would do.

If she judged that other autonomous functions had appeared inside her, the next thing to do was resolve this.

"What I have to do has not changed. Other than that, we already have no more choices."

She understood this.

Even so..... the human mimicry program still advocated that she should help Layfon and Felli. In order to reach its goal, its has postponed the decision of the host Lævateinn.

"Even so, you still want to help them?"

She deliberately treated the human mimicry program as a body copy, asking it a question:

"Why? You have already reached your goal. That is something I have not achieved through now."

Correct.

"I haven't been able to reach my goal. But, I can reach my goal by absorbing your, and you can also achieve your goal through this."

That should be the ideal situation.

Even so, the human mimicry program still didn't have a response.

"You don't want to accomplish your goal?"

What did this mean? Lævateinn groped for more possibilities. Why would the human mimicry program 'Vati' refuse the command of the host Lævateinn?

"......Because you don't want to die?"

She murmured this.

After the mission completed, it would lose its body after being absorbed by Lævateinn. Was it that the human mimicry program believed that this was the same as the 'death' of organisms, so it defied the order?

However, the human mimicry program still didn't have a response.

"Because you don't want to lose your companions?"

There was a small response.

Her machinery couldn't tell a lie in this situation. It could only keep their silence or make a correct response.

The human mimicry program was the same in this regard. After all, the host Lævateinn had not given it the right to lie.

"You don't want to lose your companions... so the reason is something like that."

Just by receiving that response, she could instantly narrow down the list of things she had to cover.

"You don't want the situation to change? .....No, the point in time to hope that she would change has already passed."

She wanted to push forward. In a keyword-limited search, she managed to naturally find a word-processed story.

Machines weren't able to tell stories, but they could analyze stories. They could systematically run through other situations and compare similar parts.

"You don't want to leave this story. You want to stay in the Academy City with the identity of a student, and stay by Meishen Trinden's side."

Her chest relayed pain.

Actually, no abnormal situation had occurred.

It was only the human mimicry program showing an intense response, interfering with the nerve network crisscrossing through her entire body.

".....Is that why?"

Lævateinn lightly placed her hand on her chest, and spoke to the human mimicry program inside her:

"That proposal is not bad."

Lævateinn murmured this.

She was the same, she wouldn't lie without a reason, and she judged that currently there was no reason to lie.

"But it's an impossible thing."

Even so, she still asserted it.

"The problem is, the situation is no longer something where I can decide everything on my own. There are enemies here. They exist only to defeat me whether I exist as a human or as a machine. Ignoring those people and staying in this world is an impossible thing. They have already grasped my position. If I don't move, the opponents will attack sooner or later."

Lævateinn didn't have a concept of longevity. Though she had spoken of it, she and humans were still worlds apart. Humans would give in before the time became an obstacle and take action.

"Other than acting, we have no other choice. Maintaining the safety of the city is the same."

She continued speaking.

In Lævateinn's heart, what she had to do had long since been predetermined. She would rely on talking to create weak points in the human mimicry program's defense, and attack from there.

The weakness only happened for a moment. The human mimicry program wavered slightly, showing a weak point, and was brought under Lævateinn's control. It no longer had special privileges, and its ability to resist Lævateinn had also all been sealed.

In this moment, although her exterior had not changed, Vati Len became Lævateinn.

"......But, I also want to confirm something."

The monologuing that she had become used to was directed towards the human mimicry program 'Vati' that had already lost the ability to reply.

"So, I will slightly postpone the time of removing 'Vati B'. If they still haven't withdrawn before then, then they will be to blame."

After finishing the monologue that was at the same time words spoken for 'Vati' to hear, Lævateinn stood up.

"Then, of the answer you let me see, I also have questions I wish to ask."

This was the final experience she would have in this place.

Layfon leaped high.

His destination was the top of the tall tower. The monster that had mimicked this abandoned city was fighting with the monster called Harpe there.

(Your target?)

"The tower!"

Layfon instantly responded to Felli's question.

(I understand.)

"I'll spread a defensive formation around Felli with the steel threads. Against normal enemies there should be no problems, but ....."

(Don't worry about me, I also have a move I want to try out. Don't concern yourself over me, and put your focus somewhere else.)

"Okay!"

(Also, since you set the tower as your target, it's not so much the original body as it is a specialized weapon portion.)

"Huhh?"

(Who asked you to charge out without listening to me.)

"Then..... Even if you say that....."

(Haah, whatever. Just fight over there then. Perhaps you'll get the element of surprise.)

"Huh? Uh....."

(I'll find the original body.)

"C.....Can you do it?"

(From my analysis to now, I already understand that it's the same system as the giant monster that we fought in Grendan.)

"In that case....."

(Yes. If it's the same as that monster, it also controls that fine particle substance. I will find it.)

"Understood!"

The tactics were decided. Layfon added speed to the sprint that he had almost stopped, continuously leaping using the steel threads as footholds.

The storm of energy raged around the tower looming before him. Heat that seemed like it would scorch him if he so much as touched it lightly produced strong winds, trying to blow Layfon's body far away.

Layfon pushed back the wind pressure, arriving at a position where he could see the top of the tower.

"Then..... I'll go up!"

He used Kei, flowing it into the Adamantium Dite.

Destroy the tower.

Felli wanted him to act as bait, and Layfon who planned to do this took up the restored black blade of the Adamantium Dite, assuming a stance, and attacking with a technique.

External Kei variant - Sendan.

Dense Kei to which Composite Blast had been added swirled around the exterior of the tower and then clashed. It tore through the storm of raging energy, cutting a deep line in the outer wall, and reaching the interior.

The feeling inside the tower was the same as when he had sneaked in before.

"Next is the target!"

This time Layfon didn't want to sneak into the tower, but to commence destruction, so he had no reason to care about the situation inside. Layfon used his Kei to his heart's content, raising his concentration and focusing his energy into a technique.

Perhaps noticing Layfon's presence, the tower moved.

Even though he had Felli's assistance, the raging heat and energy still distorted his vision. In the midst of his distorted vision, Layfon felt some sort of strange movement.

"!"

Layfon leaped high, spreading steel threads everywhere in order to create footholds.

A beam of light passed through the place where Layfon had just been standing.

This was an attack from the tower meant for him.

Changes had already appeared on the outside portion of the tower, and many objects like glass spheres had grown out of it. A troublesome feeling prickled his back, and Layfon once again leaped.

The countless thin beams of light fired from the spheres chased him from behind.

After the beams of light shot into the distance, the responses of the steel threads that had just been there disappeared.

They had been cut - no, they had definitely been melted by the high heat.

(Those are incredibly high temperature heat rays, please treat it as if you'll die upon contact.)

"I won't be hit!"

But, just now it had actually been very dangerous. If the opponent was a Military Artist, Layfon could faintly perceive what the enemy would do next based on small things like the atmosphere or their gaze, but this didn't work for the enemy before him. It didn't even seem to be an organism like filth monsters, so he could sense no omens of attacks at all before they happened.

If he waited to move until after he saw it then he would be too late. Layfon realized that he had to move continuously. He not only treaded on the steel threads, but also used the threads to wrap up rubble from the ground, using them to move.

He also continuously used his Kei at the suitable time, raising its density.

The dancing beams of heat scorched his protective clothing.

While feeling as if he himself would also soon be scorched, Layfon released the Kei infused in his blade.

Heaven's Blade Art - Silent Flash.

He released the heaviest and slowest technique. Though he had sacrificed a Dite in the battle with Nina and Claribel, after that Layfon had improved his skill at Composite Blast, so only using it once wouldn't break the Dite.

However, the heat released from the Dite wasn't less than the heat of the air around him burning his protective gear.

No, he had once heard this voice before.

"Harpe."

Before the other party replied, changes occurred.

An explosion. But unfortunately this was not produced by Layfon's technique. It was a self-destruction. The top of the tower that had begun to tilt didn't catch ablaze, but simply exploded, becoming rubble of various sizes flying out to the surroundings.

Layfon once again continued leaping upwards while destroying the rubble that assaulted him.

"That's not ordinary rubble, those are things used to eliminate you."

"What did you say?"

The voice that rang out inside his helmet was muffled, but he could hear it clearly.

"Concentrate on self-defense. Widen the distance again, I am now destroying the tower."

Harpe's words immediately became reality. The rubble that scattered in all directions burst without a sound, quickly changing shape.

Becoming countless spheres.

The countless spheres that were formed released slender links to connect to each other, pulling at each other, while following a complex track to move to face Layfon.

The spheres that had been produced were limitless in number, and did not only attack Layfon.

"Felli!"

The voice that had told him to concentrate on defense was still by his ears, and Layfon once again retreated while calling out.

(I'm currently confirming.)

Felli's voice was very calm, even if the defensive formation of steel threads that Layfon had woven himself was over there.

(I have tactics of my own. You don't need to concern yourself over me, right now please focus your mind on battle.)

Felli said this, but Layfon couldn't change his mood so easily.

But to be honest, Layfon had entered a condition of being unable to quickly take action, as the links produced by the numerous spheres collided with each other and bounced off. Such a game-like movement was occurring between the many spheres, drawing closer to Layfon.

Their movements were far too complex, and even if he tried to avoid it he wouldn't be able to completely judge their paths. Layfon could only use the Shim Adamantium Dite's blade to hack at the things before him, perhaps making them rebound.

The spheres were far too numerous, and Layfon's surroundings were filled with sparks. The spheres dragged each other, moving while bouncing off each other. Layfon had involuntarily been caught in the movement of the group of spheres while he acted to defend himself and deflect the spheres, and had been incorporated into the entire offensive like a small gear.

If he stopped deflecting the spheres, then he would be drowned in the pummeling of the group of spheres, but even if he continued deflecting them, he would still be pulled into the range of the tower.

Layfon was in a helpless state, and could only watch himself being engulfed by the torrent of spheres.

"Damn!"

Layfon had been completely trapped. If the enemy still planned some other attack, perhaps he would be unable to deal with it.

(Leave it to me.)

Just as the impatient feeling was about to take over his body, Felli's voice sounded in the helmet.

"Huh?"

(Please stand your ground, don't make any weird movements.)

"Eh, even if you tell me that....."

Felli planned to do something. Layfon had received that message, but there were things he couldn't do.

(I didn't ask you to stay completely still.)

Felli almost mercilessly returned his words, and just at that moment.....

Light surrounded Layfon.

Purple light came from below, springing up from around Felli's location, and then formed many beams crossing around Layfon's surroundings.

Layfon who was surrounded by the spheres also saw this scene.

Because the beams wiped out the group of spheres that was trying to squash Layfon.

"This is....."

After being released from the group of spheres, Layfon stepped on the wreckage of the spheres that had lost their power and were falling to the ground, leaping into the sky and landing on the steel threads. The other spheres that had appeared in the surroundings were still being pierced by the purple light that continuously shot out from below, being swept away, destroyed, and falling down.

(This is an application of Psychokinesis mines.)

Felli said only these simple words.

(Although, it doesn't have much power, nor can it be used continuously. Please alleviate the enemy's attacks over here.)

"Okay!"

After responding, Layfon leaped.

Afterwards, the light being shot out from below also stopped.

A group of spheres was still left over here. Other than saving Layfon, Felli had prioritized destroying the objects that were trying to get closer to her.

Layfon couldn't bear to leave everything to Felli like this.

"Huah!"

External Kei variant - Roar Kei.

Though he didn't understand what kind of substance it was, it seemed very difficult to destroy these spheres with slashes and strikes, and he had understood the reason from how Felli's beams of light easily wiped out the group of spheres.

Therefore, spreading something in all directions that didn't rely on physical impacts to destroy would be enough.

The Luckens' secret vibration waves responded to Layfon's expectations, smashing the spheres one by one.

Layfon jumped across the wreckage, advancing forwards.

"Didn't I ask you to widen the distance?"

Harpe's voice sounded in his helmet again.

"Why do I have to trust you?"

The first time they encountered each other, Harpe had seemed to control many filth monsters.

Layfon felt that it wasn't an enemy. But, perhaps he would only learn the truth now. It wasn't something he could drop his guard around.

"I will forever monitor the Aurora Field, in order to guard the humans of this world from the hands of the Nano-Celluloids, and for that path I have always lived and improved myself."

"......Do you control the filth monsters?"

"The records of our talk before still remain. I said this. 'I am the Cloud-Cell Separation Interface IV Harpe. The goal of my existence is to oversee the end of the Aurora Field in this world, and to protect it as well as I can.'"

"....."

"If you still have more to say, then realize that I did not say the things I protect were humans."

"But....."

"Right now there is no time to explain my relation with filth monsters. Because of the connections and conflicts between the humans of this world and the Nano-Celluloids, I must begin speaking from the creation of this world."

(Layfon.)

"Felli....."

(The best method for now is not to increase our enemies.)

"I understand that, but....."

It was indeed like that. Layfon let out a breath and calmed down, widening the distance between him and the tall tower.

(Moreover we have already completed this trip's goal. If it plans on doing something, it's a very effective screen for us.)

"!"

Felli almost unconcernedly said this, making Layfon hurriedly swallow the words in his mouth.

He thought that Harpe would hear.

(I have already seen through the way it delivers sound. It uses a solid portion fixed to the helmet as an amplifier, relying on it to transmit sound.)

"Ah, uh....."

(I already removed that portion. Even if it set a listening device somewhere, I have set up counter-measures.)

"I feel like Felli is especially powerful this time."

(You're not the only one who has to prepare for what has to be done.)

"I know that....."

(Then, go do what you need to do. Prove that we have strength.
)

"Prove that we are strong."

(Starting from now is the time for you to develop your ability.)

"Yes!"

An arrow appeared in the vision that was shown through Felli's Psychokinesis. Layfon followed the arrow's guidance and began moving.

Layfon twisted his body in the air and fell towards the ground head-first.

New sound from the sky above became giant waves and was released, passing through Layfon and vibrating his entire body as if to change his falling path.

Harpe prepared to do something.

(The temperature above is increasing at an extraordinary rate.)

Because the upper portion of the tower had already crumbled, the attacks of the abandoned city had already stopped. This was a great opportunity for Harpe to attack.

Moreover the abandoned city had to take time to defend, and it definitely had no time to notice Layfon.

Layfon fell towards the direction shown by Felli's arrow.

The arrow slightly changed direction, and the target object seemed not to be fixed in the same place.

Layfon fell while raising the blade of the Shim Adamantium Dite and taking up a stance. His target could move, meaning that it was possible that it could escape the moment it noticed what this side was doing. Thinking of the regenerative capabilities of the opponent, Layfon didn't think that opportunities would appear often. He had to strike the winning blow before it noticed.

"Haa!"

Layfon let out a breath to ease his tension, and used his Kei with his entire might.

His target was the giant reinforcements running vertically and horizontally that supported the upper portion of the tower. Maintaining the land that humans lived on, it could be called a spine of the city's back, and though its volume was not as large as the tall tower, it was still enormous.

Layfon didn't slow down. The possibility and fear of failing and colliding with the steel was pushed away bit by bit by the rhythm of his Kei flow.

Layfon flowed his Kei into the blade. Through Layfon's reliable senses, the Dite replied to his great Kei flow.

This wasn't because of the improvement of Composite Blast. The fruits of Harley and Kirik's relentless hard work was this -

even if he used the Dites for Heaven's Blade Arts, the Dites still wouldn't be damaged quickly.

It wasn't only the Adamantium Dite with these results, the Shim Adamantium Dite had also been provided with these improvements.

"I'll use every bit of strength, and let you see it well."

The Dite's ability.

Composite Blast's true worth.

Allow Layfon and Felli, Kirik and Harley's hard work up through now build up and come to fruition, this was what Layfon needed to do right now.

He wanted to show these results to Nina and the others.

From the vision in his helmet, the indicator arrow changed its position at short intervals. Was this because the opponent had noticed his attempt? But, the speed of its movement wasn't high.

He could do it.

He would do it for her to see.

The arrow moved, and Layfon predicted its movement, cutting down with his raised blade.

Psyharden Technique - Flame Cut.

Flame danced along the cut path, chasing the track of the blade.

When the flame caught up, the blade had already produced results.

The feeling of hitting his target was in his hands.

The power of the Kei technique that he released even slowed the speed of Layfon's fall. The flame swelling around the cut path wrapped around Layfon's body, and Layfon relied on changing his posture to extend his feet to the reinforcement.

Layfon stood upright on the reinforcement, staring hard with his eyes, and leaped into the sky the moment before he slipped off the reinforcement.

This power gave the cut carved along the reinforcement a final blow.

Kyiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii.....

This wasn't the sharp metallic sound that the steel would give off.

Rather, it was the screech of something.

While Layfon's back was to the sound as he repeatedly jumped towards Felli, a different image entered his vision. It was Felli's consideration.

Over there, something like a female figure had grown out of the sliding reinforcement.

It was the girl who was looked exactly the same as Vati. Hadn't she claimed to be 'Lævateinn'?

She let out a cry that humans would never be able to make, while struggling intensely at that place.

Her fingertips, hair, protective clothing, and even skin all flew out as powder, scattering everywhere.

She gradually crumbled.

Gradually disappeared into nothing.

"Did we defeat it?"

(Probably.)

Felli responded to the words that he quietly muttered.

(The response has disappeared.)

"We won....."

Compared to the feelings that swarmed his heart, the words coming out of his mouth were powerless.

(We can't be careless. The heat that Harpe is releasing from above is still continuing to increase, we should leave this place quickly.)

"Okay."

Indeed, in the sky, Harpe's surroundings were beginning to distort. If not for Felli's aid, it would be blinding enough to be impossible to see.

Had Harpe not grasped the actions of Layfon and Felli? Was that a fake? Or perhaps did he simply want to give the enemy a completely deadly blow?

Layfon didn't know what to think. However, regardless of the answer, it didn't give him a reason to continue staying in this place .

Felli's figure entered his eyes. Layfon released the defensive formation around her, grabbing her without stopping his feet, and running towards the position of the motorcycle parked outside the city.

"How is the situation?"

"Nothing has changed. Compared to that, I'm rather concerned about the situation above. If we get pulled into it we won't be able to handle it."

Their helmets touched each other, and the untreated voice relied on vibrations to travel to each other. So that was how it was, this slightly muffled sound indeed sounded like the voice that Harpe had sent.

The muffled voice that Felli hadn't transmitted through the Psychokinesis flake made Layfon feel a hard-to-describe feeling of safety.

"We've done what we can, let's quickly get out of here."

After making the reply, Layfon reached the outskirts of the city carrying Felli, and descended to the ground.

The motorcycle was untouched. Layfon put Felli into the vehicle , and then sat on it himself.

Just as he was preparing to do so, his body was suddenly sent flying.

Who was it?

"Wha-?"

Layfon who had just been sent flying didn't have any way to understand what had happened in that moment.

It wasn't Felli's strength, because it was far too strong. Layfon flew away from the motorcycle and slid on the ground. As this happened to him, the thing that had just happened greeted his eyes.

'Vati B's figure had suddenly appeared by the motorcycle, grabbing Felli.

Even the motorcycle outside of the city had long since been within the range of 'Vati B's invisible grasp. His carelessness made him clench his teeth.

"This thing!"

"Don't move."

'Vati B' made a strange sound, tightening the arm wrapped around Felli's neck.

"Ugh!"

Layfon couldn't move. The opponent didn't possess the weak strength of a female that its exterior resembled. If she had a reason, 'Vati B' could break Felli's neck whenever it wanted.

"......What do you want?"

The one who asked this was Felli who was grabbed.

"If you only want to kill me, then you wouldn't have done something like this. What goal do you have for doing this?"

"....."

'Vati B' stopped moving because of Felli's words. In order to not let an opportunity to save Felli slip, Layfon quietly watched the situation.

'Vati B' showed her face and stood still outside of the city where pollutants raged. If he looked closely, he could see that it was crumbling all over its body. Every part of its protective clothing, as well as the part of its face that was exposed flaked off like sand, scattered by the wind.

This proved that the strike just now was definitely not a wasted effort.

"I have a question..... to ask."

Felli hadn't guessed wrong. 'Vati B' asked a question in a ruined mechanical voice:

"What kind of a person is the female that you recognize who looks very much like me?"

"......Huh?"

This was a an unexpected question. Layfon had never dreamed that 'Vati B' would ask him about the female that looked like it..... about Vati.

"What kind of a person.....?"

"What do you think about it, I want to know your feelings."

As to what 'Vati B's goal was for asking this question, Layfon really had no idea.

"Though we don't run across her much, I feel that she's a very weird girl."

"Felli!"

The excessively straightforward opinion made Layfon break into a cold sweat.

"She's obviously a normal person, but is expressionless like a Psychokinesist, moreover she does things too perfectly, making people feel that she's too meticulous."

"But, it feels like she's pretty hardworking."

Layfon hadn't said this to alleviate Felli's merciless criticism. Even though she had spoken like that, 'Vati B' still didn't show any signs of moving.

It truly wanted to hear about Vati.

Because of that kind of feeling, Layfon had decided to express his opinions. Its body was obviously crumbling, but 'Vati B' completely ignored its condition, even wanting to know what everyone thought about Vati, so Layfon was very intrigued as to what significance this kind of small thing had to it.

"Vati helps out in Meishen's store. I feel that it's because of her that Meishen was able to open the store. Naruki and Mifi also said something similar, and Meishen also recognizes that."

Meishen relied on Vati.

Layfon had seen the appearance of Meishen and Vati making cakes together, and the delivery in the morning seemed to also be managed by Vati. To the shy Meishen, this was definitely a great help.

When Meishen made new cakes or sweets and asked people to try them, she would not only look very happy, but in those times she would certainly mention Vati, saying that she was incredible.

There would be a day when she would make a cake that would make Vati say 'it's delicious'.

Meishen had said this.

Afterwards, Layfon had also thought:

"I feel that Vati admires Meishen."

Seeing her appearance gazing at Meishen made Layfon have that kind of feeling.

So he was very angry.

He felt anger at everything being a lie.

He felt anger, at there unexpectedly being such a being next to Meishen, at himself who had somehow not noticed this, at Meishen who trusted Vati and who had been betrayed.

'Vati B' still suppressed Felli, and Layfon looked sharply into its gaze.

"......How wretched we are."

His anger endlessly spilled forth.

Judging by 'Vati B's crumbling appearance, it definitely needed time to be able to kill Felli. Could he make it in that time in the situation where he had to ensure Felli's safety? Layfon used his anger as a driving force, coldly calculating.

"How about this."

'Vati B' murmured.

However, Layfon didn't listen to the words, but rather made these words into a opening, making it into an opportunity.

Psyharden Technique - Reflecting Water Ferry.

Layfon cut down the distance in an instant, cutting off the arm holding Felli. He pulled back the blade that he had swung with one arm while pulling Felli with the other empty hand.

The pulling movement and the cutting motion were simultaneous, and the cut path sliced through 'Vati B' who pursued from behind.

No blood sprayed out.

Instead, 'Vati B's body spread out a sand-like substance. Like a sand dune exploding, the sand-like substance covered Layfon's vision in an instant, but in this situation it quickly disappeared.

"Are you alright?"

Layfon quickly rushed over to help Felli up.

"Nn....."

Felli blankly nodded her head.

"What is it?"

"No..... did you hear it?"

"Huh?"

"That 'Vati B'..... what it said in the end."

".....What did it say?"

"It said, 'has it become close to humankind at all?'."

"....."

"What do you think that means?"

"I don't know, but more importantly....."

Layfon raised his head to look up.

Harpe was still there, and it was still increasing the energy density. It planned to destroy the city and turn it into dust without leaving anything, this was already an indubitable fact.

"We had better escape quickly."

He had no idea at all how much destruction would be created.

Perhaps it was waiting for Layfon and Felli to leave, so it was taking action this late.

"I know."

After putting Felli into the sidecar, Layfon truly began driving the motorcycle.

From behind he felt a beam of light pushing his back. What had happened after all? What he could confirm was that it hadn't been something trivial.

"Please grab on tightly."

After saying this to Felli, Layfon sped the motorcycle up as fast as possible.

An unexpected fighting force had made its debut. It was an external factor that threw the battle between the Cloud-Cell Separation Interface and the Nano-Celluloid Interface into disarray .

The reason was these two humans.

"Leave quickly!"

Harpe roared. The other party seemed to have removed the tool that it used to communicate, but even so, Harpe still roared. Even if he understood that this roar would be blocked out by the sound of the increasing energy, it still roared.

Harpe's voice couldn't reach them, but it believed that the two humans were very used to battle. If his judgment was correct, when the two humans noticed the situation here, they would begin retreating after achieving their goal.

Moreover their goal was to destroy the core of 'Vati B'. This would be a very uplifting thing for humans.

The Nano-Celluloids had obviously noticed the change in their master, but it hadn't mattered to them. They had even deviated from their original goal, which was to protect the lives of humankind, even switching to the opposite path. Harpe had betrayed them. At the time he had reformed himself, becoming the Cloud-Cell Interface.

After battle, battle, and endless battle, it had finally succeeded in banishing Ignasis and the Nano-Celluloids from this world.

Time had passed, and arrived at the present.

Harpe also felt the abnormalities in the moon, and also knew that Durindana had attacked Grendan.

Even Lævateinn's copy that had stayed silent for ages had begun moving.

The end would soon be upon them.

Not the end of the world, but something linked to it. Ignasis was linked to this world. Only destroying this world could free Ignasis, and fighting those who had become the protectors of humankind was the relevance of the end.

That was what the end entailed, and the conclusion could possibly become the world's collapse.

However, Harpe's existence was to keep that from happening, so the descendants of the moon had gathered in Grendan.

"Only this will tilt the balance in the end."

Perhaps because it was immortal and continuously learned, but the machine Harpe would mix poetic expressions while it was speaking.

There were no so-called emotions in this, only that in its endless studying on how to correctly express information to humans, it had learned this manner of expression.

Harpe didn't suffer the effects or changes of time, but existed continuously in the form of a machine.

To prepare for the upcoming war.

At this time, the Cloud-Cell Interface that was both a machine and a weapon emitted light from its entire body.

All of the nanomachines that composed Harpe's exterior had become energy generators. The energy after it was released would become extraordinarily high heat rays, and it planned to burn down 'Vati B's core that had been struck down and had stopped moving.

If it had time, it could possibly start up the backup core that existed somewhere. In order to avoid that situation from happening, in order to burn it down without leaving half a trace, it had to release its attack as soon as possible.

"Leave quickly!"

Even though it knew its voice couldn't reach, it still roared. It had to give the warning; it couldn't endanger the humans.

Stopped in front of it, 'Vati B' hadn't changed. If it changed, he would have to fire the attack even if it would endanger the humans.

It couldn't give up the great chance to strike the final blow on it because of two humans.

The situation wouldn't develop into that. The motorcycle that the two humans were riding securely neared the safety range.

Fire.

Harpe had long since locked on to its target, and next was only to fire the strike.

The trigger was pulled. The Cloud-Cell Interface's body was melted by the gargantuan energy as it directed the beam towards the abandoned city below.

The light rushed forwards, and an explosion erupted.

Harpe surveyed the scene while quickly carrying out confirmation checks. Eighty percent of the substance composing its body had been lost because of the heat, and its current body was ragged and dangling in the wind like a giant bundle of rags.

When the beam shot out, the giant bundle of rags in the sky became even more torn.

"..........!"

Though the shock had torn some of its thinking loops, Harpe still found the place where the beam had been fired from.

"It's come."

The opponent had special invisibility functions, so it hadn't noticed.

A huge fort had been positioned nearby as if to surround the city. Perhaps that positioning was in order to burn down the preparations that the abandoned city was carrying out.

"Lævateinn!"

Harpe roared. This wasn't a roar aimed at the Interface 1. It was a machine, and even if it could distinguish enemies and companions on its own, it didn't possess feelings like hatred towards its enemies. This wasn't a meaningless roar.

This was to warn the retreating humans who were driving the motorcycle.

But, that warning also wouldn't reach their ears. However, it still roared.

Even if no one heard, issuing a warning was still the job of the machine.

The wind of the explosion shook the motorcycle.

The aftermath just barely reached the location of Layfon and Felli, and judging by the scale of the destruction, that was very surprising.

Layfon who drove the motorcycle could see Felli out of the corner of his vision that she provided.

The beam of light that had dropped from the sky had penetrated the abandoned city, and the giant round structure had cracked in an instant, emitting smoke and flame as it crumbled. The violently raging heat and flame hadn't let the pieces become rubble, burning them in an instant.

The heatwave had chased after the motorcycle, seeming to almost push them into the air. Layfon released Kei, deflecting the heatwave.

"Are you alright?"

"Nn."

Felli sat in the sidecar, and Layfon listened to her voice, his eyes not halting his confirmation of the scene.

Harpe was also shown in the scene.

Though it was buried in the middle of the light, Harpe's presence was still huge enough to overwhelm someone, even if by now it had become ragged and swinging in the wind.

It could only be the heat ray that it had released that could have burned him like this. He could see how to use Kei techniques like this, but wasn't skilled enough to handle his power to produce this destruction.

"Is that the end?"

"Things should be alright now."

Yes, this was the end.

Satisfaction and discomfort alternated in his chest. The two of them had done what they had decided to do, except this wasn't the same as the feeling he had when the threat attacked head-on. It was a feeling of exhaustion like when he was finally able to relax, but with a tiny feeling of disappointment because he knew this wasn't the end. There was also the final numbness towards battle, which might have been because his attitude towards Military Arts was now different from the feeling of the progress and chasing his limits.

Could he truly do it? This doubt assaulted his heart.

Could he reach his goal like this? That sort of doubt.

He had arrived here with the desire to advance his future, and this had succeeded, giving him a sense of accomplishment, and this reality was a crucial element that made him unable to confirm whether the doubt that assaulted his heart was because he hadn't completely achieved his goal.

He had the uncomfortable mindset that if he didn't succeed this time, there wouldn't be a next time.

"In the end, we should quickly return to Zuellni. We need to confirm with our own eyes what that thing regarding Vati is about ."

"......That's true."

Was Vati truly like that? Was she truly a monster like a Nano-Celluloid? They had to confirm this.

"If she truly is, it'll be a big situation."

It wasn't Meishen alone whose life was in danger, but rather a crisis for the entirety of Zuellni.

Particularly if Vati herself knew that Layfon and Felli had noticed Vati's true goal, the situation would become even more so.

The two of them didn't have time to savor the feelings inside them. In order to proceed to Zuellni, Layfon prepared to adjust the direction of the motorcycle.

Just as he was about to do this.

The light became even brighter.

"......What!"

Layfon couldn't keep up with the speed of the light. After the beam of light shot out, Layfon shouted out, sliding the tires of the motorcycle against the ground and relying on this to reduce his speed.

He looked backwards.

The heavy sound of an explosion shook the sky. The place where Harpe had just been was surrounded by flame. The aftermath of the explosion rang out for a long time, and Layfon extended his hand to touch his weapon belt during the noise.

"An attack?"

Layfon didn't have time to worry, and he drew out the Shim Adamantium Dite from his weapon belt.

"There's no response. .....No, this is....."

In order to catch up to Zuellni, Felli hadn't called back her Psychokinesis flakes, so she used those flakes to quickly analyze the situation, scanning the surroundings to check for suspicious objects.

"There's a response. The enemy has mimicked a rock, but I noticed its heat response. The enemy is a giant cannon."

"A cannon?"

Why would that kind of thing be here?

No, that wasn't it. Hadn't he just seen? The opponent could change form at will.

In other words, this situation was also like that.

Harpe's roar came from behind.

"Harpe?"

Harpe who had been torn by the explosion appeared. Its ragged body had become even smaller, with holes opened everywhere, and fire burning inside. Harpe rushed dangerously into the air in that condition.

The roar continued. Though it was only a roar to their ears, it carried a strange cadence, perhaps because the sound devices had broken.

"Don't you think this is very weird?"

"I know."

Felli's actions were very fast. The things that Layfon felt doubts about, she had already begun to investigate.

"What it's yelling, the meaning is 'Lævateinn'."

"Lævateinn?"

Then, the giant cannon that had shot Harpe was the original body of Lævateinn?

Not 'Vati B', but the original.

"She's here?"

Vati was here?

"There's a heat response from the mouth of the cannon, she plans to shoot again."

After he heard Felli say this, Layfon instantly took action.

"Please stay here and don't move!"

After leaving these words, Layfon dismounted from the motorcycle, and began running.

"Can I catch up.....?"

He murmured as he ran.

No, he had to catch up. In this battle, Layfon didn't have any good intent for Harpe, but it could be said that the enemy of an enemy was a friend. Regardless of whether it was the Layfon from the past or the current Layfon, he thought this way.

One could also say..... that the meaning was that there were other ways to explain this.

'We're comrades who fought together!'

If it were Nina, she definitely would have charged out yelling something like this.

Layfon had also thought about this.

So Layfon ran. The conclusion was still the same - rescuing Harpe - the problem was the heart that made his feet move. The words that he had shelved in his heart were far too many, not at all unified.

He had never hated his methods of fighting calmly.

But he also greatly admired Nina, hoping that he could also become like her some day.

His thoughts were in disarray. Though they were in disarray, the answer still hadn't changed.

So he ran.

Who was Layfon Alseif? Even if the answer was complex, he still ran.

Dashing forward continuously.

(The heat in the barrel of the cannon has begun to increase rapidly, you may be too late.....)

"I'll catch up!"

Layfon ran while compressing his Kei.

Psyharden Technique - Reflecting Water Ferry.

Layfon used almost all of the Kei that he had compressed, releasing all of the technique that he could in that moment of movement.

The giant cannon greeted his eye.

Layfon cut through the air as he moved, and the heat wrapped his body. Was this the excess heat created from the last shot, or the

heat produced for the next attack? The protective gear had its limits, so Layfon had to stop his feet here.

(This place is already dangerous, if you're hit.....)

"Don't worry!"

He replied to Felli's warning. That phrase was half spoken for his self to hear, but he was also confident in it. The confidence he had acquired in the abandoned city helped solidify those words.

Layfon once again increased the speed of his Kei flow, taking a stance.

And attacked.

Heaven's Blade Art - Hazy Garret.

The Shim Adamantium Dite swung out, and the blade disappeared without a trace. The slash jumped without stopping, drawing towards the giant cannon.

(Run, quickly!)

Felli's voice almost became a scream.

Layfon retreated, and the feeling of striking the target was conveyed to the Dite grasped tightly in his palm.

The slash cut the outside of the cannon, and then sunk inside.

The rest was simple. Hazy Garret destroyed the shackles binding the energy compressed inside.

It took the form of an explosion.

"Ugh!"

The pressure of the explosion hit Layfon. Even so, he still pulled back in time.

(Layfon, are you alright?)

"Nn....."

(We've made it this far, can you not do stupid things?)

"I guess that's true."

Layfon regulated his thoroughly disordered breathing. After getting rid of the situation that had suddenly appeared, even he had the mood of wanting to sit down right where he was.

Just then.

Layfon didn't want disappointment to obliterate the feeling of success at a difficult task.

Layfon desperately held back the feeling of wanting to sit down . Just then, the words that coincidentally passed through his mind deeply provoked him.

He had achieved his goal in the abandoned city. He had stood and fought, and he had been able to fight.

"It's a pretty good feeling."

(Don't do stupid things just to feel good.)

"Hahaha."

Felli spoke strictly, and Layfon could only laugh as a response.

(Anyway, I'll go over there, please wait there.)

"I know."

Layfon accepted Felli's kindness, sitting down on the ground. This wasn't because Layfon was tired, it could even be said that he was still in an excited state.

His mood was far too excited, and his body was occupied with feelings that his mind hadn't linked together yet.

"What is it? It's like I've experienced these feelings before."

In the motorcycle workshop, Layfon had seen Felli's driving skills. She still needed some time to get to this place. Layfon started thinking as he sat.

"Was it the first time I fought? The feeling's not really the same, so what is it....."

The scene was in his mind, but it was far too blurry, so he didn't really understand.

"What is it.....? If there was something to refresh my memories.....".

Layfon tried to look for a stimulus, but there wouldn't be such an object in the wilderness. What about the thing in his hand? Even if he looked at all the equipment of his protective gear, Layfon still couldn't think of that memory.

"Um.....? Ah....."

Seeing himself playing with the weapon belt, Layfon thought of it.

"Right, it was Leerin."

(.....What about her?)

"Ah, it's not....."

The Psychokinetic flake brought Felli's voice, but the voice that also came from the distance made Layfon reflexively turn to look in that direction.

He thought that he would see the motorcycle. The time in which Felli had arrived was faster than he had thought, but that only meant that Felli had made progress in her driving skill.

He thought that as he turned his head.

"!"

There was a giant face there.

(What about her?)

Felli's voice asked again.

The face - wasn't something human. It was hard and rough, and covered with a substance like bone. Its jaw was very long, its teeth neatly lined up inside.

It was Harpe's face.

"I thank you two."

Harpe said this with a majestic voice.

"In order to prove my thanks, I will send you two to the place you want to go."

"Th.....Thanks."

Layfon unconsciously thanked him, and then suddenly realized .

"Huh? Then Felli also....."

"She's already inside."

(I'm already inside.)

"Huh?"

Layfon was surprised.

The second voice made him jump, and Harpe took one last look, opening its giant mouth wide.

This was also related to the fact that Layfon was exhausted.

"Huh?"

The mouth swallowed.

Layfon wasn't fast enough to respond, and was swallowed by Harpe.

Before he realized it, Layfon noticed that he and Felli were in an unknown space.

"Huh?"

"It seems like this is inside Harpe's body."

Layfon felt that it was hard to form words, but Felli who had arrived here first was unexpectedly able to speak calmly.

"This is.....?"

Layfon didn't need to look around him to be able to quickly confirm what was in the surroundings. In other words, there was nothing here at all. This place only had had a space for Layfon and Felli to sit on their knees, nothing more.

"This place, it....."

Seeing the walls surrounding them, Layfon felt that this scene was quite familiar.

Correct. In the city of Nina's great-grandfather Gildred, Layfon had once been enclosed inside a cramped space like this.

In the stifling space without any exits, that was obviously inorganic but was filled with an organic atmosphere.

"Though it's very oppressive, I can't feel any hostility."

(Well, this kind of condition really puts a great burden on the mind. Then, how is this?)

Harpe's voice sounded in all directions.

Afterwards, the scenery quickly changed. The space that had only the boring walls disappeared, and a cozy space where they could see the scenery outside appeared, as if a glass stage had been set up.

(If your destination is the Academy City Zuellni, there will still be two hours to get there. Is that correct?)

Harpe asked this of Layfon and Felli who were too surprised to utter a sound.

"......Uh, aah....."

When he recovered from his surprise, Layfon almost wanted to nod, but restrained himself from making that movement at the last moment.

"I want to ask something, Vati is named something Lævateinn..... uh....."

"Nano-Celluloid. She is the Nano-Celluloid Interface 1 Lævateinn. I am the Cloud-Cell Separation Interface IV Harpe. I was born as a Nano-Celluloid, but have become enemies with them due to acting on different principles. Interface 1 is the mother of the initial series of Nano-Celluloids that were created, I cannot mistake it."

"....."

"Did you know that Vati Len was a Nano-Celluloid from the start?"

Felli asked instead of Layfon who was silent.

(I knew when she invaded. But she spread many fake bodies, so I had to spend time to locate the original body. I noticed thirty

seconds before. Academy City Zuellni, where Interface 1 was, with the identity Vati Len.)

The voice with which Harpe spoke was very oppressive, full of a mechanical feeling.

"Is Vati..... Is Lævateinn still in Zuellni?"

(The main body has not yet moved, but the nanomachines that she controls have already moved. She plans to gather her fighting power. Interface 1 seems to plan to carry out her final plan.)

"Plan?"

(She wants to release the master of the Nano-Celluloids, Ignasis. In order to accomplish that goal, she needs to destroy the world.)

"How could that....."

(The person who is the master key is sleeping deeply in Grendan in the form of a girl, and her death is the death of the world. This world is her creation, and it can only be maintained because of her.)

Layfon couldn't help but want to hold his head.

"Suddenly wanting me to trust this kind of thing, I....."

But, but.....

"But, Captain and Leerin are already fighting in this battleground."

"Nn."

"Then, the place we need to go is already decided."

"Nn."

Felli nodded, having no objections.

Was this because she had the same feelings? Or did she give all the decision-making authority to Layfon?

Regardless of the truth, Layfon couldn't betray the eyes with which Felli looked at him.

"Then let's go, to Grendan."

Chapter 3 - Her, her, and her

The sound of a doorknock rang out.

Just as she was studying and thinking about drinking some water, the sound of the doorknock rang out, making Meishen a bit flustered.

"I..... I'm coming."

Meishen reached the corridor almost tripping over her feet, and then walked to the window.

She peeped out of the window to confirm, and the person standing there was Vati.

"Please wait a bit."

After opening the door, she saw Vati holding the bowl from dinner in her hands.

"I came to return the bowl."

"You could have come tomorrow."

"I also have something to ask senpai about."

"Nn?"

"If it won't disturb you."

"It won't, come in."

Vati didn't say this kind of thing often. So Meishen invited her in.

"Let me get you something to drink."

"No..... Okay, sorry to bother."

"?"

Vati's appearance was different from normal. Though she was still expressionless like normal, even Meishen could feel that there was a discrepancy.

Meishen looked at Vati who obediently sat in the living room as she prepared to make tea.

"Here."

"Thank you, senpai."

After putting the tea in front of Vati, Meishen also sat on the sofa.

"....."

Then.....

What to do?

Meishen's entire body was stiff as she sat next to Vati.

In this kind of situation, how should she lead Vati to let her talk about her troubles smoothly?

After all, Meishen had never done this kind of thing.

"......Can I speak?"

"Huh? Ah, yes!"

Just as Meishen was confused, Vati opened her mouth.

"Go ahead....."

Meishen felt a bit sad as she motioned for Vati to speak.

"What I wanted to talk about is something from before I came to this city."

"Nn."

"I was created as a replacement."

"....."

"I am a thing created to replace someone who was lost."

Vati said this kind of incredible thing as soon as she begun her prologue.

Meishen was shocked. Perhaps she could say 'How could that.....' in a tone bringing a hard-to-describe anger and confusion, or maybe she could only say that kind of thing.

However, Meishen held those words back.

A calm portion in the deepest part of her surprise made Meishen look closely at Vati's face. As she said these things, Vati's face was calm and placid like normal, what could be called an expression that didn't show any emotions.

A calm voice in her heart said that Meishen should calmly check her appearance.

So Meishen didn't say anything at all.

Meishen put the tea on the table, straightening her back, and looking at Vati's face that seemed almost frozen, looking at her eyes, and continuing to listen to her next words.

Vati continued speaking:

"But I can't become a replacement. My evaluation in this area is very poor. Yes, I probably disappointed my master."

After saying this, Vati paused for a bit. She wasn't thirsty, nor had she drank tea to moisten her mouth. The oppressive silence as she searched for the next words flowed forth from her slightly opened mouth.

"......Fortunately, my mission is not only to be a replacement. My evaluations other than this job are quite good, so I can still live like this. [4]

But, I'm not satisfied with just this much. An existence like me who was created in some important situation can tell the disappointment of my master at a glance. It doesn't matter even if I don't do my other job. Even if it is someone else who does this job, I fear that they will also receive a high evaluation.

I am pursuing the evaluation for which I am me.

I want to succeed in the true evaluation for which my master truly created me."

Her expression didn't change.

Her tone hadn't changed. Her nice voice held something like an indifferent tone, as if she were reading a book.

But, it wasn't only that. Probably.

Why?

After hearing this, her chest hurt. Though this kind of pain was mild, Meishen had a sort of feeling that it grew more and more painful.

With every word that Vati said in her indifferent tone, that feeling became more intense.....

Deep under her stern expression, were there any emotions?

Meishen couldn't help thinking about this.

"But, that isn't a simple thing. My master doesn't expect me to have any progress in that area anymore. If my master doesn't hold any expectations of me, I'm not able to do it.

But regardless, I want to pursue that part, I want to make progress, and because of this I decided to go against the orders of my master. In order to achieve my goal - the goal that I was created for - I decided to betray my master."

Meishen held back her surprised voice. The pain continued to increase, stinging her chest. The heavy feeling would truly become heavier with every word Vati spoke in her indifferent voice.

With no way to grasp the cause and effect of the situation, it couldn't be said that Meishen could understand what she was trying to express.

Even so, the pain still came to her.

"So, I betrayed my host. I knew my host was in a dead end situation, but I was ignored it. Because I had to do this. It was only by doing this that I could obtain what I wanted. I judged that I needed it no matter what."

"....."

Meishen felt that it was hard to breathe, even thinking of telling Vati not to say any more.

Casually, without much emphasis, as if she were reading a book .

She spoke like that.

But it hurt Meishen.

Meishen completely couldn't understand the words she said, but the emotions that seeped out of them made her hurt, making her body have such a feeling.

Meishen had a premonition that the pain she felt in her chest from these words would become something hard to endure.

Though she wanted to tell Vati to stop, Meishen still stopped herself from doing so. Under Vati's expressionless mask, something was going to pour out.

Meishen wanted to endure those feelings for Vati.

"I believe that I acted correctly. In order to achieve my goal, in order to live like me, in order to become the correct me that my master expected, I had to know many things. I have many things I need to learn. If I can't learn all of this, then I will have to rely on experience and experiments to find the answer.

I had to give up my master. To me, in order to know the answer , it was most fitting that the thing I abandoned was my master.

However, would doing this truly let me become the me that my host hoped for? I have already lost the ability to confirm the answer.

I can only understand by thinking carefully. But, I still did this. In order to complete my goal, I lost all of the reasons for my goal. I

did something foolish. But until now, I still believed that I could only do this.

What was the right thing to do? If I didn't do anything, perhaps I wouldn't have lost my master. But, then I would never have been able to become the me that I hoped for, or the me that my master hoped for.

If I didn't do this, then I would still think that way even now."

After finishing saying this, Vati fell silent.

Her closed lips wouldn't open again, right? Meishen wondered. She had finished what she wanted to say, so thinking this way should be correct.

However, a kind of premonition told Meishen that her words hadn't ended.

Vati should still have something more to say. Meishen calmly waited for her to open her mouth again.

Then, she parted her lips.

"......I know the feeling of losing something. I lost my goal, lost my target for moving forward. The process of arriving at my target still continues, but regardless of how close I get, in the end it's only a wasted effort.

Where should I go?

What can I do?

I already have nothing, and I have nowhere to go. I already know that the slow advance of time is meaningless. Even so, I still can only do this, because I have nothing else that I can do.

I thought of obtaining my master's approval, I wanted to tell my master 'I've already become the me that you hoped for', but..... but ....."

That was it. Meishen thought. After the long story, what came afterwards was an endless murmur. It wasn't like Vati to say that kind of thing, so these were the feelings that she wanted to express the most.

Complaints, cowardly words, these words counted as both, completely different from what she would usually say, so this was definitely the feelings that she wanted to uncover.

Meishen didn't know why Vati hadn't said this until now. Even if she thought about it there was no use.

Right now, Meishen had heard what Vati had said.

It was the time for her to gather her courage.

"Vati....."

Meishen naturally pulled Vati over, hugging her tightly.

"It's alright, it's alright."

"Meishen-senpai."

"If you have nowhere to go, then start over and look for somewhere. If you don't know what to do, you just have to find a goal. It's alright, you're here because you have a strong spirit, it's alright to start over a few times."

"....."

"Even if you're not a person, I'm here."

"Senpai."

"I really like you."

Meishen hadn't missed Vati's expression as she heard these words.

"Thank you very much."

After she left Meishen's side, Vati said this.

"I understand that if it's you, you would definitely say that kind of thing."

"Vati.....?"

"You told me the answer. Even if I lost the thing I loved, I can still stand up again. Even if I can't return to the past, I can continue living on.

You told me about the so-called humankind."

Vati said this. Meishen didn't really understand what she had said. But, her expression as she said this made Meishen unable to move her gaze.

"Thank you very much. It's only because you said that to me that I can continue on."

"Huh?"

"Goodbye."

The moment Vati said this, Meishen's eyelids suddenly became heavy. Her consciousness faced, and her strength left her body.

"Vati....."

She was right there, gazing at Meishen from the other side of her fading vision.

What expression had appeared on her?

Vati's expression, her immovable expression had moved.

It was truly only a bit, a very slight change.

But, her expression had moved.

Was it a smile, or was it crying? Since it was faint and unreal, making her face shake stiffly, Meishen was able to see that expression.

"Thank you very much, it was great to have met you."

Vati's voice entered her blurry consciousness.

"Wait....."

She seemed to have said the word 'goodbye'. Meishen who thought this reached out her hand.

However, her arm didn't grab anything.

When she recovered her consciousness, Meishen was already lying in bed.

She thought it was a dream.

However, it wasn't a dream.

The next morning, regardless of how long Meishen waited, Vati didn't come to the store.

It had always hidden itself at a distance.

This was the Battle City Armadune. After that last battle, it hadn't come close to Zuellni. Though this was the case, it also hadn't gotten far from Zuellni.

Armadune maintained a distance, keeping behind the Academy City Zuellni, moving around with it.

In the center of the city where there was nothing as far as the eye could see, Gildred sat on a wooden chair drinking tea. A big umbrella was hung over the old man's head, and on the table next to him, various sweets like small pastries had been arranged in perfect order on a plate.

Gildred put the ceramic cup back on the table, empty.

Then, the teapot placed on the table moved, pouring tea into the cup. Other than Gildred, there weren't any people here, had the teapot moved by itself?

The thing that had moved it was a tentacle that had grown and extended out of part of the table. This tentacle used its form to wrap around the teapot's handle, pouring tea into the cup.

Gildred put a pastry in his mouth and once again took up the teapot. The old man who tasted the steaming tea in his mouth gazed somewhere without batting an eyelash.

Ahead of that place was Zuellni.

"Well."

He murmured.

The man who was as tough as nails stared at Zuellni with an oppressively sharp gaze. Even though his body was already ancient, he was still a mighty Military Artist.

"Armadune, are the preparations ready?"

The old man asked this, not moving his body from the bench or shifting his gaze. Only the tentacle extending from the table slightly waved.

The tentacle couldn't speak, but Gildred who had asked the question captured the essence of the response.

"Then....."

Gildred put down the cup and stood up, placing the steaming cup back on the table. When he stood up, the table, chair, and umbrella all changed. The table and chair sank into the ground, the umbrella folded back up, and also sank into the ground as expected.

Then, it again returned to the empty city that Layfon and Nina had seen from that time.

After rising, Gildred raised his empty hand to his chest, raising his fingers.

"Let's go."

He slowly extended his arm, like a conductor beginning to play out an orchestra.

It was at that moment.

Light appeared in the air above.

A nasty noise like arcing electricity sounded along with the quick flash of light, occurring on a wide scale above the autonomous moving city.

The light shone on the body of Gildred, becoming blinding.

Conditions should have returned to normal after the beam of light departed, but what extended before his eyes was a boundless, dark city.

But, it wasn't empty.

A person appeared at a slightly farther distance than Gildred.

"Did you think this old man would let you go?"

That person was staying here as if crouching on the ground, and Gildred questioned him with a cold tone.

"I already understand what kind of beings you are. As for how we would deal with you, could it be that you believed we would rely only on force?"

The old man spoke while grasping two iron whips in his hands.

"In the air of this city, there is a special wave that makes your kind feel confused, so those parts of you that hide outside definitely won't be able to come close."

"......The battle last time was only a feint, and your goal was to drop my guard?"

"That's how it is."

That person stood up, and Gildred called her name as a reply:

"Lævateinn".

"....."

The person who stood there was the 'Vati B' that Layfon and Felli had just seen. The two of them were completely the same, whether in appearance or the clothing it wore, everything was completely the same as 'Vati B'.

However, the person who stood there was not 'Vati B'.

She was Lævateinn, the original body of 'Vati B', and the true form of Vati who had been in the Academy City Zuellni until just now.

This female wore protective clothing like Military Artist clothing, and when she stood up, an extraordinarily cold aura emanated from her body.

Her parted lips weaved monotone words:

"Gildred Antalk, can I ask you not to interrupt things?"

"Do you think this old man will answer your requests?"

"Is that a no?"

"That's a no. You should die here."

"Really?"

Lævateinn didn't move.

But, Gildred raised the restored iron whips.

"Then, I can only destroy you."

"This old man will smash the fate you are trying to bring about."

Lævateinn and Gildred tossed words at each other.

However, the killing intent that was produced could only be described in very intense words.

The flame from the sudden intense explosion danced through the Battle City.

Today had also passed peacefully.

However, even if she wanted to relax, Nina couldn't do that.

Layfon and Felli weren't here. An endless concern heightened that reality, tightly gripping Nina's chest.

Vati hadn't made any moves. Harley had said very clearly that the two of them had taken a motorcycle and left the city.

But, Harley didn't know the destination of the two of them either. Nina and Claribel were unable to find the answer to why they had left the city even if they thought till their heads hurt.

"Those guys....."

Nina wanted to rage. But, whose fault was it that Layfon and Felli had taken this kind of action? As soon as she thought of this, she couldn't say a thing.

"Damn!"

She couldn't say the truth, making Nina feel quite regretful. If she had had the strength to think of a way to resolve this before they had worried..... Nina tried thinking this way, but she hadn't had such a thing.

Had she made the wrong choice? She couldn't help but think that way. Though she had been threatened by Vati, perhaps there was some way that she could send the information. She involuntarily thought this way.

However, it was already too late for anything. Layfon and Felli had left the city to pursue something.

"From a different point of view, perhaps it's relatively safer outside of Zuellni."

Claribel had said this, but Nina simply couldn't accept that opinion.

Her concern grew stronger and stronger.

To get rid of this kind of concern, Nina had always wanted to become stronger even through today. She believed that she had succeeded. Relying on her training with Claribel, she had reached a realm that she definitely couldn't have reached single-handedly. Though the Haikizoku in her body allowed Nina's Kei to become strong, she also needed power to control it. In this area, her training with Claribel could be said to be quite commendable.

Though it was the two of them together, she had also succeeded in defeating Layfon in the competition.

Nina had indeed become strong.

However, this still didn't dispel the caution or fear she had towards Vati. Even now, she still didn't have the feeling that she was able to fight or win.

The new concern that had emerged tormented Nina.

Had her efforts until now been for nothing? Nina felt that this comfort had slammed into her body and was trying to grab her.

Nina could only endlessly urge herself on inside her heart, saying that that kind of thing couldn't have happened, and then training every day with Claribel.

The day of battle was drawing near. It was obviously closing in, but she didn't know when it would arrive.

Since she didn't know when, when it truly came she could only be surprised.

"......Huh?"

When Nina sighed because of the impatience formed from many concerns overlapping with each other, she felt that feeling.

Something was shaking the air.

Nina felt that there was something invisible mixed in the air next to her, seeming as if it were lightly stroking Nina's back.

Perhaps she could explain this feeling as her being too sensitive, or overthinking things.

However, Nina wasn't overthinking.

Something had just happened. Though she didn't have clear evidence, Nina acted very quickly. She quickly changed out of her home clothing into her uniform, and then charged out of the room.

"Nina!"

Nina met Claribel as she entered the corridor. It was the evening, but she also wore her uniform.

"There's something strange."

"You really think so?"

The two of them neared each other, lowering their voices to talk . After confirming with extremely tense voices, the two of them naturally gazed at the same place.

It was the location of Vati's room.

After nodding their heads and signaling with their gazes, the two of them quickly moved to the room.

The two of them listened closely in front of the room, exploring the situation inside.

"How is it?"

"No sounds."

What to do? Claribel asked with her eyes. Nina didn't have any hesitation. It wasn't only her, even Claribel had felt what to do.

Therefore, it wasn't a very difficult question.

Nina wordlessly destroyed the door nearby, entering the room by force. Claribel followed behind her without a sound.

"She's not here."

"Has something really happened?"

"What do we do?'

"We have to find her....."

"But, if she has taken action, she might no longer be here."

"Ugh....."

Nina and Claribel hadn't moved. The two of them had decided that if that time was truly coming, then even if they bet their lives to stop Vati, the result would be wasting that opportunity in vain.

If Vati had escaped, then Nina and Claribel were too late. That kind of useless and miserable feeling burned inside Nina.

"You truly can't do anything."

".....Huh?"

"What?"

The two of them looked at each other. They had both thought that they had heard an unfamiliar voice.

Just as the two of them were preparing to open their mouth to ask, their gazes suddenly became dark.

"Thus....."

"We moved? Like before?"

The feeling they had back then when they were being pulled over by Gildred tightly wrapped around the two of them. The feeling under their feet gradually disappeared, and the feeling of a substance flowing in some direction enclosed their bodies.

"Can I bring her there?"

Who was that?

"Oh, come over here."

That voice once again entered her mind.

"Huh? Wait, huh....."

"Clara!"

Claribel's surprised shout moved far away in the blink of an eye . Even Nina's yelling disappeared without reverberating off anywhere.

"Sorry, I don't want to continue lending a helping hand in your life. Next is for the person watching over you to lend his helping hand."

That seemingly downcast voice also gradually disappeared.

She had been left behind. Nina had that kind of feeling.

"Wha-!"

Nina didn't make another sound. A torrent caught Nina and refused to relax, but she didn't have any trouble breathing because of it. However, what would become of her, what would become of the situation, and what would happen afterwards, those kinds of unknown horrors bound Nina's feet.

Nina reached out her arm. Though she didn't know where she wanted to reach out to, Nina still reached out anyways.

Someone grabbed her hand.

"Uwah!"

Light had suddenly appeared in the shadowy world, and the dazzling light blinded Nina's eyes.

The source of the light was the one who had grabbed Nina's extended hand.

"......Schneibel?"

Her eyes had already become accustomed to the light.

What grabbed Nina actually wasn't a hand, but something approximately like the foot of a bird, and the one who grabbed Nina's hand was Schneibel.

"Why.....?"

".....Because Gildred has stopped."

"Huh?"

"I called you over too late, hurry."

Nina had no time to talk. The speed of the flow became even more intense, and Nina could only tightly shut her eyes and endure the feeling.

When she was released from the space, a light even more blinding than Schneibel covered her entire body.

Was it the sun? No, it should be evening right now.

The light covering Nina's body this time was sparks.

Or was it fire?

Regardless of which, it wasn't a scene that could be watched while jumping for joy.

Nina held her breath. She could have made a sound, but it would have been blotted out by the sound of grinding metal that dominated this place.

A giant object was about to fall from the air, and countless tentacles took defensive action to keep the giant object from doing so.

The discordant sound of two things crashing into each other rang out in all directions.

This was place was somewhere she had been before, her great-grandfather's city.

After she noticed this, Nina quickly searched for his body, finding it in an instant.

"Great-grandfather!"

Gildred was fighting with something. He stood there without moving, was it because he hadn't noticed Nina's shouts, or did he ignore her on purpose?

Her great-grandfather's back was in Nina's vision.

"Those methods that kept nanomachines from coming close were truly impressive. Even if it was only momentary."

The current area was filled with raucous, unpleasant sounds, so why could her voice still be heard?

The one standing before Gildred was Vati.

No, it was Lævateinn. It wasn't the Vati that Nina recognized. The heights of the two were slightly different, their clothing wasn't the same, and even her face was more mature than the one Nina knew.

She had given up the false identity of Vati, and become Lævateinn.

"Your judgment to have a quick battle was also good, because the fights of us Nano-Celluloids become long wars very easily."

So, why could she hear Lævateinn's voice?

Gildred hadn't moved his body?

"Great-grandfather!"

Nina called out.

But, Nina's voice was swallowed by the dissonance, and wasn't even able to reach her own ears, only leaving behind the feeling of having said those words.

She should charge over to Gildred's side, she should go help him. Her body ordered this. Nina restored her Dite. The Haikizoku Melnisc roared in concert. Had her hearing stopped? She couldn't even hear the noise anymore.

In the soundless world, Nina shouted.

"If the state of your body was perfect, then perhaps these battle plans would have succeeded."

Nina charged towards the back of Gildred.

However, that movement was blocked by something.

"Wha-!"

The one who stopped her wasn't Lævateinn.

It was a tentacle. The tentacles that appeared after separating from the ground overlapped in layers in front of Nina to block her path.

"What? What does that mean?"

Nina's mind was in disarray. These tentacles should be her great-grandfather's companion. That should be the case, so why did they want to stop Nina, to keep her from helping her great-grandfather?

"Move aside! I'll go determine the winner, I will stop Lævateinn. "

Along with her great-grandfather.

However, the tentacles didn't move aside, and not only this, they even wrapped around Nina, expressing the attitude that no matter what, they wouldn't let her go.

"You didn't compute for the condition of your own body, human flesh has limits."

Nina already knew the secret as to why only Lævateinn's voice reached this place.

The tentacles had the effect of sound transmission, letting her voice reach Nina.

"......What's the meaning of this?'

Nina was filled with anger as she stared at the tentacles.

The tone that Lævateinn spoke with was filled with a bad feeling, she had to rush over to her great-grandfather's side as soon as possible.

However, the one who blocked Nina was her great-grandfather's companion, this city. Thinking of how she could communicate with these tentacles, Nina was even less able to forgive their current response.

But in this situation, Nina's fury didn't have any effect on the developments at all.

"You've lived too long, that is the reason for your defeat."

Lævateinn's murmur crossed the space between the two of them.

Nina's position was very far from the two of them.

She knew this.

Gildred fell to his knees. He fell to the ground, and the iron whips in his hands also dropped to the ground.

"Great-grandfather!"

He had fallen.

"Goodbye."

The dissonance disappeared. The thing that was about to drop from the sky crumbled and disappeared. The sparks disappeared, and the sky once again returned to darkness.

"Lævateinn!"

Nina roared. Her voice reached her ears.

She charged forward.

In front of Nina's might, the net of tentacles surrounding her was easily blown away.

Lævateinn turned her body, not even looking at the fallen Gildred.

"Waitttttttttttt!"

Even if she roared, she didn't stop her footsteps.

Nina hadn't reached that place, but her figure had already disappeared without a trace.

All that was left was a tranquil quiet.

All that was left here was her fallen great-grandfather, and excessively quiet city, and Nina who had lost the target of her rage and who could only hold her anger.

"Great-grandfather!"

However, right now wasn't the time to get angry. Nina rushed to the side of the fallen Gildred.

".....That Schneibel, she's unexpectedly nosy. No, maybe not."

After holding Gildred up, he slightly opened his eyelids and murmured. Blood flowed from his lips, and his face had gone pale, becoming worse and worse.

"That person is only correctly completing the fate that it was endowed with." [5]

"Great-grandfather, I'll go find help!"

"It's no use, it's too late."

"How can that be!"

"Do you know how old this old man is? Lævateinn was right. Regardless of the means a non-mechanical body uses, it won't be able to escape the doomsday of death. Before this kind of limit, I have lost to her, that's all it is."

"I don't- I don't want that."

"Don't say that kind of willful thing."

Gildred breathed lightly, and then smiled, saying:

"When you were small, I sent dolls to you. Are you saying that compared to back then, you haven't grown up at all?"

"I haven't, I haven't! I don't want great-grandfather to die!"

"But, that's an impossible thing. I will die. But it's not because of defeat, it's because of my limits."

Her great-grandfather's hand lightly touched Nina's face.

Nina was surprised, her great-grandfather's hand was wet.

It was blood.

"Listen well. The loss this time is all because of this old man. If it were you....."

"Great-grandfather....."

"I have no dolls this time."

After saying this, Gildred's body emitted light.

"Dischale, Tentorium, Falysodam."

He called out three names, and Nina had heard these names before.

Melnisc had said that these Electronic Fairies were the same as the other Electronic Fairy in Nina's body. The same as the nameless Electronic Fairy that had once saved Nina's life.

These Electronic Fairies revealed their figures, their bodies landing brilliantly before Gildred and Nina.

One seemed like an arrogant youngster.

One seemed like a teenager about the same age as Nina.

One seemed like a young beauty with a calm temperament.

And also.....

"Armadune."

Gildred called this name.

Vibrations came from below. Just as Nina thought about this, a part of the city began splitting, and became tentacles, and then these tentacles gathered to form a giant plant.

A bud appeared from the stem that the tentacles had formed. This stem quickly enlarged, opening into a red flower.

In the center of the flower was a girl.

The girl wore flower petals as clothing, and tears rolled down her eyes.

Armadune wasn't the only crying Electronic Fairy.

The arrogant youngster, probably Dischale, clenched its fist.

The teenager, Tentorium, clenched its teeth.

The calm maiden, Falysodam, pressed its lips together.

Some were enduring their anger, some were crying.

"......From now onwards, they are yours."

"Great-grandfather, what are you saying?"

"They are individuals but at the same time are not individuals. They are Electronic Fairies born in the Senou City, forms born from Electronic Fairies who have foregone becoming cities. How much power they can create depends on your tolerance. Everything will be decided by you."

"Great-grandfather, it can't, it can't be like that."

"I already have no way to use them well. But, if it's you, if it's your soul..... you should be able to endure their gathered determination and strength....."

"I can't!"

Nina shouted, she wanted to say that that couldn't be.

The meaning of inheriting them, that was.....

"Great-grandfather's life....."

Weren't they the Electronic Fairies that extended her great-grandfather's life? Though her great-grandfather had used artificial hibernation, wasn't it because of their strength that he had been able to extend his life to this degree?

"Extending life has no meaning, it's only what you want to do after extending your life that means something."

Gildred stayed unmoving.

"This old man can no longer do it. Therefore, I have no reason to monopolize this strength. The will and life that has been gathered together can't be used for something like that."

The old man's eyes stared through Nina, and the hand stroking her face grabbed her shoulder.

"It's up to you."

"Great-grandfather, I....."

"If you think you're too weak, then become strong. For your heart to become strong you don't need time, you only need the determination."

"I don't want great-grandfather to die."

"That's not possible."

Gildred quickly replied.

"Things that will die will die. It's only this life that was extended with difficulty that has come to an end. I've only been born a little earlier than the other old men, and died a bit later than them."

The hand that held her shoulder relaxed.

"I give them to you."

A smile appeared on her great-grandfather's face, and he looked at Nina, and then looked at the Electronic Fairies.

He looked at Armadune.

Then, he looked at his own hand.

He made a fist.....

"I'm sorry."

He murmured.

"I truly didn't want to let you bear the burden in the end, but with these two hands....."

He murmured this.

"..............!"

The thing disappearing from her arms made Nina utter a soundless scream towards the sky.

"It would have been better if you were completely saved."

The words that Karian had left behind stuck inside Leerin's chest like a curse and refused to leave.

To be completely saved? Let herself be saved from where?

She was clearly the one saving.

Saving humankind from the current situation, from the crisis that would definitely come to the world.

"......Right."

Leerin mumbled.

Karian was definitely mistaken. Perhaps he had thought wrongly. What Leerin currently needed wasn't a savior.

But.....

Leerin hadn't been slow enough not to understand what Karian had said.

However, Leerin really hadn't been able to retort. Even if he didn't give her a chance to defend herself, Leerin hadn't been able to retort, perhaps wanting to make these words become unimportant fluff. But her heart couldn't do such a thing.

Then, she would cut off everything for him to see.

It was because Leerin thought this that she made a suggestion to the Queen, asking the Queen to grant him that kind of thing.

To grant him a Heaven's Blade.

To grant him Wolfstein.

"Is this alright?"

The one who asked this was Lucia, whom Leerin had requested to adjust the Heaven's Blade into a weapon for Haia before the ceremony.

Leerin had gone to Lucia's workplace to personally request this job of her. She was Leerin's senpai in the orphanage they had grown up in, and was as reliable as an older sister, living on her own as a Dite technician, and currently specially supervised the adjustment of Ruimei's Heaven's Blade.

She had also had a child with Ruimei.

While Leerin was enjoying the feel of the small baby, Lucia said this kind of thing.

"I can't decide how a Heaven's Blade is dealt with!"

"Really?"

Her eyes stared at Leerin without blinking. Though Leerin's body went stiff because of her older sister's gaze, a troublesome feeling twisting back and forth inside her, she smiled naturally.

"You don't have the authority to decide who to give the Heaven's Blades to, but you can probably chip in to which of the two Heaven's Blades to give, right?"

"I can't do that kind of thing."

Though Leerin said this, Lucia kept staring at her. Leerin couldn't bear that gaze, and involuntarily lowered her head to look at the baby.

"Honestly, for things like Heaven's Blades, it doesn't matter who gets which one. For that kind of thing....."

After saying this, Lucia touched the box in front of her with her finger. What was inside was the unrestored form of the Heaven's Blade Wolfstein.

"Even if I secretly used Rui's Garrand, no one would probably notice, right?"

"How could that....."

"No, I'm not joking, I really think so."

"......Really?"

Leerin asked this, and Lucia nodded her head.

"Think about it. Heaven's Blades are Dites passed down generation to generation. They don't need replacement materials, they only need the settings to be adjusted like this, to be able to give them to the suitable Military Artist to use. Normal Dites are made of Sapphire, Ruby, and other kinds of things."

"Nn."

"Heaven's Blades only need their settings to be adjusted to be able to let anyone use an incredibly satisfactory weapon. Before Delbone-sama, there were no Psychokinesists who became Heaven's Blade successors, but the Heaven's Blades were also suitable to be used with Psychokinesis, and even the current Heaven's Blade Elsmau can use them without difficulty. In other words, these things don't have differences. Perhaps Heaven's Blades are just a convenient prop, just twelve names."

"Names."

"Then, in that case, don't you think that that person giving that thing out is meaningless?"

"Of course."

Leerin answered quickly. If she hadn't answered quickly, Lucia might say more. If she could, she didn't want to hear.

"......Ah, I've also said a lot of incredible things to that person. So I also don't want to force you."

Of course, 'that person' meant Layfon. Leerin wanted to hear what Lucia had said to Layfon, but it would only be for herself, and she might think of more unnecessary things, so Leerin could only maintain her silence.

"You'll know after you grow up, Leerin."

"Know what?"

"Adults can also make mistakes."

"....."

"Regardless of the person, everyone uses their own accumulated knowledge and experience to look at the world. We can only see the world in that way. With that kind of method we can only obtain the answer pertaining to ourselves, and there are few opportunities in which applying that sort of answer to others is correct."

"Then, you mean that we can't give out our views to others?"

"Ah, other people have completely different knowledge and experience, and it's not that easy to to succeed, unless almost all of your experiences are the same."

"Then....."

"Though we're not completely different, we can't be completely similar. Ah, it's your decision anyway, so I have no way to keep opposing it. I only want to say..... do you really not regret?"

"I don't regret it."

"....Then I won't say any more. Haia Wolfstein Laia will arrive in the afternoon, will you be coming too?"

"There's no need."

The orders Leerin had received were only to give the Heaven's Blade to Lucia.

Even Lucia worried about these kinds of things.

Knowing Leerin and Layfon and knowing the status between the two of them, everyone invariably though of the same problem, and would bring it up to Leerin once given the chance.

Having her true feeling seen through was meaningless.

However.....

She still wanted to say something.

It was, that everyone was wrong.

Deception coated her feelings, even letting Leerin fool herself.

Leerin had noticed this after Terios attacked her on that summer night.

She had noticed it after she watched him being sent to the hospital.

It wasn't the same, she thought to herself.

Though it was similar, it wasn't the same.

If it were something ordinary, perhaps it wouldn't have produced such a mistake. However, Leerin and Layfon were different. The relationship between the two of them wasn't ordinary.

Because of this, there had been a misunderstanding. Because of this, there had been a mistake.

In this kind of situation, a peculiar condition had emerged. It couldn't be the truth between the two of them.

Perhaps it was because she knew about this that she wanted to replace the misunderstanding with the truth.

Leerin thought that Layfon might also have had this kind of misunderstanding. And that misunderstanding had been created in many people who had seen the two of them, and then the misunderstanding had spread.

"But, this is enough."

Leerin believed.

Were there people who needed to know the truth? No. The only reason for it was that the condition Leerin expected would continue on.

"The enemies will be here soon."

Leerin's aspirations were only this.

The Heaven's Blade successor Haia Wolfstein Laia had been born. The empty Heaven's Blades had been filled again, and this was truly important.

"There's only one more."

There was only one more Heaven's Blade whose owner hadn't been decided.

Would the twelve Heaven's Blades be cobbled together first, or would the other side take action first?

Originally Leerin had thought that the enemies were on the other side of the sky, and she had never thought that they had already come close to them. After learning this, Leerin's feelings became impatient.

Because she knew a fact, that the opponent was in Zuellni.

Hurry up and come.

Since the moment she learned that, she had these thoughts.

Hurry up and leave that city, she had always thought.

So Leerin had long since been waiting for this feeling.

"Your Majesty!"

After she felt it in her room, Leerin quickly rushed into the palace.

"Aah, I know."

Alsheyra had also felt it. Saya quietly stood by her side.

"......In the end, we haven't even gotten twelve together once, have we?"

The Queen held the Heaven's Blade whose owner hadn't been decided.

"Should I just use it myself?"

"That idea might not be bad. Since if we can't get through this battle smoothly, there won't be another chance."

It wasn't Alsheyra who answered her monologue, nor was it Saya, but rather the voice of a third person.

"It's okay to use it so much that it breaks too."

"Who-?"

Though the voice came, a figure couldn't be seen.

Meow.....

At some time, a black cat had appeared in the hall.

"Rigzario....."

Facing Alsheyra's surprised expression, Leerin murmured.

"Rigzario? Aah....."

Alsheyra seemed to have some impression of this name, so she almost unconcernedly accepted the talking cat.

"Well, what are you planning?" [6]

"Honestly, I still want to help, so I'll bring in the reserve candidate."

"Reserve candidate?"

"Correct."

The black cat nodded its head.

Afterwards, the scenery behind the black cat became skewed, and something popped out from there.

"Iyah!"

Someone screamed, and tumbled onto the floor of the hall.

"Ouchhhh..... where is this place?"

There was a girl wearing the uniform of Zuellni there.

"Clara?"

"Huh? Ah, Your Majesty.....?"

The two of them looked at each other with similar expressions. After hearing Alsheyra, Leerin could guess that this girl was the girl who had run away from the Ronsmier house, Claribel.

"Eh~ .....Oh well, it's alright."

Alsheyra sighed deeply, and gave her the thing in her hand. Claribel reflexively accepted the object, a distracted expression still on her face.

"Ah, use it well. If you lose then it's a dead end."

"Huh? Huh?"

At that moment, she became the Heaven's Blade Successor - Claribel Noiran Ronsmier. But, she still had a confused expression on her face as if she didn't know that her identity had changed like this.

Though this was an understandable thing.

But, Leerin didn't care about this. Alsheyra hadn't embellished it, focusing on resolving the issue.

"Well, we have to carry out adjustments immediately."

"That has already been resolved. We only need to change the Heaven's Blade settings to the same as the Dite that the girl has, right?"

The black cat opened its mouth.

"Ah, then, we'll do that. Then, next is just to attack."

After murmuring this, Alsheyra strode out of the hall alone.

From the other side of the door came the sound of her yelling ' Emergency meeting'.

"Didn't you say that you didn't care?"

Leerin who was left behind in the hall asked this of the black cat .

The cat purred, but in contrast, the jewel on its forehead shone with light.

"You said that before, you said that this has nothing to do with you."

"Correct. Your lives have no relation with mine. Regardless of what happens, it doesn't concern me. It's not like I don't have emotions like revenge or hatred, but the object of my hatred isn't those mechanical dolls....."

"Then....."

"Ah, perhaps I want to find an answer for myself."

"Answer?"

"Regardless of how it's imitated, the same thing can't be obtained a second time, and it can't be reproduced."

"....."

"I only prepared things to this degree in order to show that."

The black cat murmured this, and Claribel who was by its side showed a surprised expression.

"Really?"

Leerin couldn't understand the black cat's words. Even if she thought about what kind of meaning the black cat's words expressed, it wasn't any use.

"Because everything has already come this far."

Who really was she? Why was she lost? Those things were insignificant. Leerin gave up on herself who had asked those questions even though she understood the reason.

"I can only completely spin the wheel of fate."

Leerin stroked the aching eye under her eyepatch.

That day, catastrophe came to Grendan.

Epilogue

The truth was really too outrageous.

After giving the matter of movement all to Harpe, the two of them had nothing to do. Layfon confirmed the condition of his Dite while he thought of the things they had just spoken about.

After he calmed down a bit, he couldn't help but think.

Grendan had a girl named Saya, and this girl had created this world, along with maintaining it. The Vati that Layfon knew was a Nano-Celluloid, and they planned to kill Saya, destroying the world.

"......Suddenly saying those things about people I don't know, no one would be able to believe it. That kind of thing is too outrageous."

"But, you believe it."

Felli and Layfon had taken off their helmets, because Harpe said the interior was safe.

Her eyes gazed straight at Layfon.

"After all, that kind of thing just happened."

Moreover, Grendan and Nina's great-grandfather definitely had experienced abnormal battles different from the ordinary fights against filth monsters.

The reason hidden inside definitely had to do with Nina and Leerin. Though he could peek into the truth through the two of them, Layfon couldn't come close to the secret at all. If Harpe was willing to divulge the answer, Layfon believed there was value in trusting it.

"Moreover, tricking us has no meaning at all. If he wanted to kill us, then he could easily do it right now."

"Don't say that, I'll get scared."

"I trust it, so I'm not scared."

"Is that so?"

"Nn."

"Because this is in Delbone's records?"

"Mm."

"That was only a hunch. Rather than that, I'm concerned about something else."

"What is it?"

"Before we entered Harpe, you once brought up Leerin's name. What did you think of?"

"Th.....That is....."

After thinking of this, Layfon showed a wry smile.

Layfon was thinking of his satisfied feeling, and he remembered that he had once experienced that kind of feeling somewhere.

"It's related to Leerin, but it also seems like it isn't."

It was when he was small.

It was before the first time he entered the battlefield.

Their older sisters had asked Layfon and Leerin to go buy things, but they encountered something unexpected en route. Cargo that had collapsed en route almost got another pedestrian involved.

Layfon, still young, had reflexively saved that person.

To the Layfon from back then, it wasn't anything impressive. No, from the position that Layfon was in, any Military Artist would have been able to save that pedestrian regardless.

"It really isn't anything impressive. It was only because I was standing there that I did it. That pedestrian wasn't saved just because of me."

It wasn't anything impressive.

However, Leerin who was next to him wasn't the same.

"She was extremely excited, and even praised me."

Layfon remembered that he had been very shy at the time, and also very happy.

"I thought of that time. What I thought at the time. Protecting people like that is the meaning of Military Artists..... After that, I entered battle for the first time. In the process of experiencing countless battles, I gradually forgot that."

Even if he said the same thing, it was different. At the time, he didn't have a sense of accomplishment.

"But, it would be good if I could become that way. Or, wanting to become that way, I'm still pretty similar to the part that decided to become that way..... right?"

Layfon unconsciously raised his head, only seeing that Felli had already stood up, coming next to him.

"Uh, what is it?"

".....Hahh, nothing can be done about this."

"Nn?"

"In the process of your personality formation, she was one of the people in that most important period. Nothing can be done about it, I understand."

"That.....?"

"But, I'm still mad."

After saying this, Felli clenched her fist.

"Felli? Huh? .....Uwah!"

The fist fiercely drilled into his cheek.

Layfon had suffered worse treatment, but he felt that the shock from this blow was greater than ever.

Translation Notes and References

1. ↑ Karian's murmur is the stuff about the sunrise. Haia says the line immediately before.
2. ↑ Stania is speaking with some sort of dialect.
3. ↑ Shante and Layfon fighting. See Volume 3.
4. ↑ Vati is continuing to talk.
5. ↑ Referring to Schneibel.
6. ↑ Alsheyra is talking to Amy Rigzario.